A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas. Commercial Values and Commercial Methods. Billboards Are Almost All Right. Architecture as Space. Architecture as Symbol. Symbol in Space before Form in Space: Las Vegas as a Communication System. The Architecture of Persuasion. Vast Space in the Historical Tradition and at the A&P. From Rome to Las Vegas. Maps of Las Vegas: Las Vegas as a Pattern of Activities. Main Street and the Strip. System and Order on the Strip, and "Twin Phenomena." Change and Permanence on the

Here is a plea for a proper architectural humanity and humility as well as a plan to accommodate the desires and values of ordinary people, who are too often dragged along on architectural ego trips and uplift programs. It is also a realistic examination of the American vernacular environment-as-it-is and a reexamination of the goal of the architect.

The challenge is clear and forthright. Articles based on material in this book have already caused a great deal of controversy and rethinking. But at the present uncertain point in the development of the Modern movement, it's a useful controversy that could result in a firmer sense of future direction and closer accommodation to social realities.

LEARNING FROM LAS VEGAS

Robert Venturi Denise Scott Brown Steven Izenour

LEARNING FROM

LAS VEGAS

Facsimile edition

Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour

The MIT Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts
London, England

香港中文大學
圖書館
02 MAY 2024
LIBRARY
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

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"The Tyranny of the Template: The Graphic Design of the First Edition of *Learning from Las Vegas*" © 2017 Denise Scott Brown

Printed and bound in Italy

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available
ISBN: 978-0-262-03696-2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Almost half a century after the first edition of *Learning from Las Vegas* was published, it remains an indispensable text in the history and theory of architecture and a foundational treatise of urbanism and postmodernism. But the original, gold-stamped, clothbound edition of the book designed by Muriel Cooper and released by MIT in 1972 is rarely seen outside of rare book rooms and collectors' libraries—and almost never with its glassine wrapper intact. Two thousand copies were printed; two thousand copies disappeared.

The book that is now known to generations of architecture students as *Learning from Las Vegas* is the modified second edition, redesigned by Denise Scott Brown for publication in 1977—a modest paperback whose appearance has remained unchanged and which has never gone out of print. The "heroic" original has attained a mythic status but remains invisible, while the "ordinary" paperback is ubiquitous and has become a classic.

It is not an accident that the large-format edition of the book was never reprinted. While it is considered by many in the design communities to be one of the monuments of architectural book design in the twentieth century, it was considered by its authors to violate some of the very design and patterning principles of the argument it housed. Steven Izenour is no longer here to represent his views nor Muriel Cooper hers, but Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi were never shy about stating their differences with Cooper and never overcame their misgivings about her "white-page aesthetic." Aron Vinegar gives a detailed account of these differences and objections, and documents the design development of both editions, in *I Am a Monument: On Learning from Las Vegas* (MIT Press, 2008).

I have long wished to reproduce the original iteration of *Learning from Las Vegas*—to make visible again the pages of the book that caused such a stir when it first appeared in 1972. But this was not the wish of its authors, and that was sufficient reason not to do it.

About a year ago, I decided to try one last time and approached Denise with a proposition: "What if you were to write a new preface to a facsimile hardcover edition, saying whatever you want to say about the book's original design and production? Would you allow us to reprint the book under that condition?" With very little negotiation, beyond agreeing that there would be no editing of her text that she didn't agree with, and that Denise would have the last word in the case of any editorial differences, we made that deal.

This facsimile of the original edition of *Learning from Las Vegas* is published with deep respect for and special thanks to Denise Scott Brown.

Roger L. Conover
MIT Press
April 11, 2017

The Tyranny of the Template: The Graphic Design of the First Edition of *Learning from Las Vegas*

Denise Scott Brown

Early Modern graphics are back. TV's sassiest talking heads and edgiest ads are supported today by gutsy 1930s sans serif fonts, stark words, and bold Bauhaus colors. In this context, MIT's decision to reproduce the "legendary" first edition of *Learning from Las Vegas* has met with a near universal "Cool!" So when we call the book's design "one irony too far" people ask, "What's their beef?"

Let me explain.

The Las Vegas studio upended sacred cows, refused to view with alarm, would not bad-mouth bad taste, and redefined architectural research. Our views emerged from Early Modern architecture and its postwar Brutalist admirers. These European thoughtways we linked to social protest of the 1960s, American social planning of that era, and emerging attitudes on democratic participation, popular culture, Pop Art, and new roles in architecture for history, symbolism, and communication.

These approaches shared an adversary: post-World War II urban renewal and its architecture, "Late Modern" to its practitioners. To us it was a twisting of Early Modern in search of the heroic and original. We called it "H&O"—ironically, because it brought social harm and urban problems. Against it we posed "U&O," the ugly and ordinary vernacular of strips and sprawl, universal in America and studied by the LLV Studio in auto cities of the Southwest and the Las Vegas Strip.

Photography was our primary tool. Propounding ideas with a focus as unpalatable as everyday architecture is not easy. We knew it would require showing "what is" before proposing "what should be" and would call for pictures as well as words to explain to ourselves what we were learning, but we soon found that the combination could help others understand our ideas too. And we discovered what every architectural journal knows, that the captions under pictures are the only texts most architects will read. So we chose a medium with generous pictures and generous captions—the photo essay.

The first LLV Studio photo essays were introductory programs that we, as faculty, produced. These described its subject matter and study topics via photographs, graphics, lectures, and written materials. As the students began their research, we made suggestions for execution, and along the way offered help and advice. But soon their own creativity was engaged, and so was Steven Izenour's. Our student at Penn and teaching assistant at Yale, Steve became coauthor of *Learning from Las Vegas* and a lifetime associate at VSBA. Spending long nights in studio, he advised particularly on films, photography, and production.

In writing the book, we outlined study topics, documented research and its results, and added comment, interpretation, and theory in two chapters with Victorian-sounding titles. As the work emerged, its outrageous photos and ebullient maps and diagrams created a hate-love exhilaration that to us conveyed the core of Las Vegas. So we asked the publisher to avoid formats that would restrict or compete with these joyful expressions. To no avail. Only on the cover was The Strip revealed as we wanted it, within a format to be read as either a scholarly monograph or a 1940s cigarette-card album, as both pop and high culture. This melding, our hijinks not theirs, represents our only contribution to the graphic design of the first edition. Muriel Cooper, MIT Press art director, acclaimed radical and renowned graphic artist, chose to design the book herself. In her mind, *Learning from Las Vegas* was to be a salute to the Bauhaus, and she believed we would go well together. But for Muriel, "radical" meant the revolution previous to ours, and, by the early 1950s, aging Modernists were far removed from the Bauhaus we knew. Their Late Modern urban projects, ones we called H&O in the book, brought the Brutalists and others concerned with street life, popular culture, communication, and symbolism to the ramparts. And in 1958, Herbert Gans, Jane Jacobs, and the social planners joined them. I was already there with the Brutalists, but was also,

through my South African and Jewish heritage, involved with debates on democracy and the loss of innocence—the ethical roots of Postmodernism. And when Robert Venturi and I met, he was headed there too.

Urban riots in the 1960s complete the story of how Late Modern thought and products became the subject of LLV's architectural and social critique. But graphic designers of the 1960s clung to the Modernist vision, with its role for them as possessors of a not-to-be-questioned expertise and a revelation that leads "the people" to rationality and freedom. "Would you tell a surgeon how to design a scalpel?" one designer (not Muriel) responded when probed on the legibility of a thin font on a busy train station platform. And here is Muriel on designing for *LLV* and its authors: "I thought: 'Boy, this is wonderful material. I'm not gonna let them screw it.' *Hah!* You should have seen it! Well, they hated it! I loved it." Cooper proposed putting a bubble-wrap jacket around the book, in homage to Las Vegas's glitz—a suggestion we firmly rejected. "What they wanted most was a Duck, not a Decorated Shed. I gave them a Duck," Cooper ironized. She must have meant the cover, the only place where she gave way. Yet ducks lie in the eye of the beholder. I would have called the cover decoration on the shed. But sadly the rest was anything but a shed.

Whatever she did later in electronics, Muriel was in our view a Late Modern book designer who abandoned the vigor of 1930s graphics for a more polite 1950s invention, Swiss Graphics and what went with it. This was the major reason for our disagreement.

However, our first criticisms were of function. The book was big, heavy, difficult to handle at a library table and impossible to read on a bus or carry in a jeans pocket. Sized to the length of The Strip, it had room to display and explain our complex matrices and charts and the leporellos we derived from Ed Ruscha. But although The Strip will pop your eyes out, nowhere was it shown in large colored pictures. Its postage stamp color shots, too small and too muddy to convey neon 22 stories high or the glint of glaze on a Roman centurion, limited our ability to make our argument.

Such cramping compositional directives I called the Tyranny of the Template. Its major limitation was a high ratio of background space to foreground content, favoring white space over picture size and content visibility. Blocks of text were proportioned to the white space more than to the illustrations. These, and the small Helvetica fonts preferred by Muriel, made our texts too short to fill the blocks. To keep pace with the illustrations they referred to, text lines had to be triple-spaced and words stretched widely on them. This guaranteed an uncomfortable read and a book design that T. S. Eliot might have called a "periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion."

That our argument against Late Modern was couched in Late Modern graphics conveyed, to say the least, a mixed message—"one irony too far," I said. We argued mightily with Muriel. "Why, when we're criticizing the use of H&O as a panacea for everything, would you use it for our book? How confusing for readers!" At a meeting in the MIT Press library, Bob gestured toward the shelves: "You could use the graphics of any one of your technical books and we wouldn't complain."

No one at the Press agreed, but we were allowed to reject the bubble-wrap cover—how could that have denoted a block-long animated neon façade? However, Muriel, distressed by our "scholarly" cover, concealed it in a glassine, Helvetica-bedecked dust jacket. Yet she did not dare hide our inset picture of a desert billboard cum triumphal archway, from which a near-naked female calls "Tan Hawaiian with Tanya." So she broke her text where the axially placed Tanya was, to leave her visible under the jacket. We hated the glassine fig leaf, its spindly font and H&O aspirations, but the semi-avoidance of Tanya made it even worse. (Nevertheless, the jacket, where it survives, adds to the selling price of the book.)

To be fair, the first edition sold well, though partly through the publisher's subvention. And by placing the work programs, especially the urban ones, beside their products, this edition reminds readers that Southwestern urbanism was as important in our study as signs, symbols, and communication. And its comparisons of maps and pictures would have been useful had their color been accurate.

The end section illustrating our work is a happier story. Early projects look good in color here. They mark our transition from academe to practice, and the joys of "learning from"—of applying in design what we had awakened to in research. Some professional journals see illustrating your ideas through your work as unacceptable egoism. We feel that describing your thought processes and methodologies as you design, showing how you took the crucial yet taxing steps from analysis to synthesis, is a good way to explain your work. It's a particular kindness and reassurance that practitioners can offer students, and it need not be an act of vanity. In any case, your own work is what's available in your files and what you know best.

One project illustrates a sad fate of some new ideas—killing by old revolutionaries. Here the victim was our design for the Transportation Square office building in Washington, laid low by Gordon Bunshaft and the Washington Fine Arts Commission. The worst of their exchanges, those where the assassinations occurred, we recalled from memory, as certain Commission meetings were declared "executive sessions"—no press admitted—and their records were not available. But they are now. And so is a legal scholar's assessment of the "Star Chamber" proceedings we endured. It's in the *LLV* appendix. Sadly, the issues of equity and justice, let alone effectiveness and probity in design review, still need intelligent cogitation.

Several years after the first edition of *Learning from Las Vegas* appeared, our editor, Barbara Ankeny, called with a surprise. More copies of the book were needed, but the unsubsidized cost would be prohibitive. Would we approve a revised version, priced for students, resembling other books in the Press library, and with considerably less white space? And would we like to design it? Would we!

Our small, cheap, readable, U&O book is skimpy, but its ethos is right. It follows the graphic principles of our first edition cover: be deadpan, don't upstage your subject, and (in the way Bob wears Brooks Brothers suits) present outrageous content in a conventional format. The revised edition took six months of my life, but it has stayed in print more than 40 years and been read by generations of students and architects.

Yet its graphic design produced other problems. A cost-saving measure placed our work programs together at the center of the book and away from their products. This underlined the identity of the studio and its value as a model for research today. But our topic work programs, already strongly abridged, were now disconnected from the maps, images, and texts that described our analyses and syntheses. This downplayed our findings on emerging automobile cities and undercut our claim that we were "evolving new tools: analytical tools for understanding new space and form, and graphic tools for representing them."

Yet automobile cities have been as important to our work as the architecture of communication, and in this sense the first edition reflected priorities missed later. But the second, despite its size, achieved greater clarity and better comparability of illustrations, partly by altering the template and reducing the amount of white space. In revising our graphics, I remembered Eliot's line, "the poetry does not matter," and how he ransacked the unpoetic to find a poetry for our time. And in learning from urban ideas of complexity and our experience "curating" slide lectures, I aimed to make points rather than look pretty.

Our urban interests were not edged out when schools introduced their own research studios. In fact, urban activity and land use maps were the first to be adapted from our topics. But there are many more research ideas to quarry from *LLV*, and in our practice we have adapted themes from Southwest urbanism, the Penn planning program, and Princeton Beaux-Arts analytiques—for use in architecture.

So some good came from the first edition. And welcome to its reissue, which provides opportunities to rethink what's appropriate today to H&O, and what's to be gained, post-NeoMo, and most of the time, from U&O—that modest, mannerist, wily dodger.

LEARNING FROM

LAS VEGAS

The MIT Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts,
and London, England

LEARNING FROM

LAS VEGAS

Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour

the grand proletarian cultural locomotive

ГЛУ

the grand premiere to the world

A&A 10 Jan 69 10:00 a.m.

To Cecilia and George

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printed
by Kingston Press Inc.
and bound
by A. Horowitz & Son Bookbinders
in the United States of America.

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Venturi, Robert.
Learning from Las Vegas.

1. Architecture—Las Vegas, Nev. 2. Symbolism
in architecture. I. Brown, Denise Scott, 1931-
joint author. II. Izenour, Steven, joint author.
III. Title.
NA735.L3V4 720.9'793'13 74-169014
ISBN 0-262-22015-6

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REVIEW-JOURNAL

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Yale U. Investigators Say Vegas Not 'Sin City'

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Yale University Study Of Las Vegas Could Alter The City's View Of Itself

LOCAL NEWS
Las Vegas SUN

ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY

Yale Prof Ups His Price For Praising LV Strip

The first part of this book is a description of our study of the architecture of the commercial strip. Part II is a generalization on symbolism in architecture and the iconography of urban sprawl from our findings in Part I. Part III describes the work of Venturi and Rauch from 1965 to mid-1971, reflecting the theories of Part II.

Passing through Las Vegas is Route 91, the archetype of the commercial strip, the phenomenon at its purest and most intense. We believe a careful documentation and analysis of its physical form is as important to architects and urbanists today as were the studies of medieval Europe and ancient Rome and Greece to earlier generations. Such a study will help to define a new type of urban form emerging in America and Europe, radically different from that we have known; one that we have been ill-equipped to deal with and that, from ignorance, we define today as urban sprawl. An aim of this studio will be, through open-minded and nonjudgmental investigation, to come to understand this new form and to begin to evolve techniques for its handling.

So started the introduction to a studio we conducted at the Yale School of Art and Architecture in the fall of 1968. It was, in fact, a research project, undertaken as a collaboration among three instructors, nine students of architecture, and two planning and two graphics students in graduate programs at Yale. The studio was entitled "Learning from Las Vegas, or Form Analysis as Design Research." Toward the end of the semester, as the spirit of Las Vegas got to them, the students changed the second name to "The Great Proletarian Cultural Locomotive."

We spent three weeks in the library, four days in Los Angeles, and ten days in Las Vegas. We returned to Yale and spent ten weeks analyzing and presenting our discoveries.

Before this, we authors had visited Las Vegas several times and written "A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas" (Architectural Forum, March 1968); this formed the basis for the research program that we drafted during the summer of 1968. We divided the work into twelve topics, to be assigned to individuals or small groups, and into five phases, including Phase III, "Applied Research," in Las Vegas. The first part of this book contains our original article augmented by the findings of the research project. Unfortunately, with twelve or so people, we were not able to cover all the research topics we had programmed, nor did we have available time or data to cover other subjects adequately. There is still a wealth of architectural information to be culled from Las Vegas. In addition, some of the emphases that were important to the studio we have not stressed in this book; for example, our pedagogical interest in evolving the traditional architectural "studio" into a new tool for teaching architecture and our particular interest in finding graphic means, more suitable than those now used by architects and planners, to describe "urban sprawl" urbanism and particularly the commercial strip.

Las Vegas met our project with courtesy and helpfulness at the technical, planning-agency level and with courtesy and unhelpfulness at the decision-making level. No funds were available at city or county hall, and the chairman of the Strip Beautification Committee felt that Yale should pay Las Vegas to make the study. The day of our arrival a local paper announced, "Yale Professor Will Praise Strip for $8,925." A few days later when, still hopeful, we requested a further sum for the making of a film, the newspaper rebounded, "Yale Professor Ups Price to Praise Strip."

The nearest we came to official financial support was a reduction in the hourly price on the use of Mr. Howard Hughes's helicopter.

Our ideas too were met with polite skepticism, and we gathered that the Beautification Committee would continue to recommend turning the Strip into a western Champs Elysées, obscuring the signs with trees and raising the humidity level with giant fountains, and that the local planning and zoning agencies would continue to try to persuade the gasoline stations to imitate the architecture of the casinos, in the interest of architectural unity.

On the other hand, the Stardust Hotel, one of the finest on the Strip, gave us all free board and lodging. The car rental agencies combined to give us a week's free use of a car. And the Young Electric Sign Company (YESCO), in particular Mr. Vaughan Cannon, constituted itself our chief host and helper in Las Vegas. In addition, we are grateful to Mr. Jerry Litman, then of the Las Vegas Sun, for trying to give us a more friendly press. And finally, to the much-respected Las Vegas citizen who took one lady Yale professor to the gala opening of the Circus Circus Casino, legally, and wangled, semilegally, an entry to this social highlight for the whole class — variously attired to meet the situation in Day-Glo-decorated castoffs from the local Salvation Army Store.

The temptation is great to augment the list of thank-yous to include all those to whom three people feel warmly grateful for help in their intellectual lives. The following list has been culled from that much larger list to include those who have been the particular intellectual and artistic underpinnings of this project. They are Donald Drew Egbert, Herbert J. Gans, J. B. Jackson, Louis Kahn, Arthur Korn, Jean Labatut, Esther McCoy, Robert B. Mitchell, Charles Moore, Lewis Mumford, the Pop artists (particularly Edward Ruscha), Vincent Scully, Charles Seeger, Melvin M. Webber, and Tom Wolfe. With some temerity we acknowledge too the help of Michelangelo, the Italian and English mannerists, Sir Edwin Lutyens, Sir Patrick Geddes, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the early generations of Heroic Modern architects.

Since we have criticized Modern architecture, it is proper here to state our intense admiration of its early period when

its founders, sensitive to their own times, proclaimed the right revolution. Our argument lies mainly with the irrelevant and distorted prolongation of that old revolution today. Similarly we have no argument with the many architects today who, having discovered in practice through economic pressure that the rhetoric of architectural revolution would not work, have jettisoned it and are building straightforward buildings in line with the needs of the client and his time. Nor is this a criticism of those architects and academics who are developing new approaches to architecture through research in allied fields and in scientific methods. These too are in part a reaction to the same architecture we have criticized. We think the more directions that architecture takes at this point, the better. Ours does not exclude theirs and vice versa.

Our more formal but heartfelt thanks for help with the studio go to Avis Car Rental, Las Vegas; The Celeste and Armand Bartos Foundation; Dennis Durden; the Honorable Oran Gragson, Mayor of Las Vegas; Dr. David Henry, Clark County Administrator; Hertz Car Rental, Las Vegas; George Izenour; Philip Johnson; The Edgar J. Kaufmann Foundation; Alan Lapidus; Morris Lapidus; National Car Rental, Las Vegas; The Ossabaw Island Project; The Nathaniel and Marjorie Owings Foundation; The Rohm and Haas Company, Philadelphia; the staff, Clark County Planning Commission; the staff, Las Vegas City Planning Commission; U.C.L.A. School of Architecture and Urban Planning; Yale Reports; The Young Electric Sign Company, Las Vegas; and to all the people in and around the Yale School of Art and Architecture who pitched in and helped, especially Gert Wood; and to Dean Howard Weaver, Charles Moore, and Yale University, none of whom found it odd that Yale architects could have serious purposes in Las Vegas, and who picked up the tab when all other sources of funding had been exhausted.

Our thanks also go to the students whose skill, energy, and wit fueled the great cultural locomotive and gave it its special character and who taught us how to live it up and learn in Las Vegas.

For the writing of the book, we thank the Edgar J. Kaufmann Foundation and the Celeste and Armand Bartos Foundation, both of which helped us a second time; the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington D.C., a federal agency created by an Act of Congress, 1965; our firm, Venturi and Rauch, especially our partner, our Rauch of Gibraltar, for his sometimes grudging but always crucial support and for the sacrifices a small office makes when three of its members write a book; we thank Virginia Gordan and Dan and Carol Scully for their help and advice with the illustrations; and Janet Schueren and Carol Rauch for typing the manuscript. And finally Steven Izenour, who is our co-worker, co-author, and sine qua non.

Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi Calivigny Island, W. I.

Note on Authorship and Attribution

I have for some time wanted to make clear that the name "Robert Venturi" when used to describe the written and architectural output of the firm Venturi and Rauch, as in "Robert Venturi has designed his building thus and so" or "Robert Venturi is developing his theory of architecture in such a manner," is unfair to the people who have added their thought and creativity to our office, especially to the three other partners. In our office, the partners are designers and fellow collaborators in design, not "critics" (except in the sense that the artist is a self-critic) and not specialist-auxiliaries and managers to a Designer. Each ranges in concern and responsibility over all aspects of each design and secondarily has an expertise, as do I, to bring to our projects.

I feel the role of prima donna culture hero even in its modern form as prima donna anticulture antihero is a late Romantic theme as obsolete for the architect and for the complex interdependecies of architectural practice today as is the "heroic and original" building for architecture. An architect strong on his own feet does not need this illusory support at the expense of other architects. As a firm, we look best when we stand as we are, a group of strong individuals who share enthusiasms and work well together, not as a pyramid with the figurehead of an Architect at the top.

John Rauch, paterfamilias of the office and my partner since 1964, is a winnower of ideas whose analytical mind helps set the design direction and reset it when it is lost. His sharp judgment prevents wasted energy in the design process. Beyond that his knowledge of construction and costs is a base for our philosophic claim and aim to produce "ugly and ordinary" architecture within the budget the first time.

Denise Scott Brown, my collaborator for twelve years, has been so intertwined in our joint development that it is impossible to define where her thought leaves off and mine begins. She is as responsible as I am for the theoretical content of this book. In the office her design contribution spans from the conceptual level to the aesthetics of details with emphasis on site planning for the larger projects. She is the urban planner for California City. Galileo Hill Park and the signs for the Twenty Mule Team Parkway are more her design than mine; she is the planner for the South Street Project and the designer of the Las Vegas and Levittown studios at Yale. We both find it painful when her work as a designer or theorist (or our shared work) is ascribed to me, as it so often is. When I try to set the record straight, I seem to play Hearst to her Marion Davies.

Gerod Clark was our first and, for years our only, architectural assistant. He has been our partner since 1968. He was responsible for the design development of most of our early projects and, among those in this book, for the Social Sciences and Humanities Buildings at Purchase and the Library at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. He is closely attuned to current art movements that are instructive to us, and we rely on him for the most refined and sophisticated aesthetic judgments.

Not a member of our firm but our collaborator of many years who has had a strong impact on our design is our structural engineer, Nicholas Gianopulos, of the Keast and Hood Company, Philadelphia. He has a warm sympathy with our ideas and a good ability to say no.

Our staff also plays a more creative part in our firm than attributions usually suggest, and we have listed in Part III the individuals whose design contributions have been particularly important for the different projects. We mention here David Manker, who worked on the "Ruscha" photograph of South Street. He was killed shortly thereafter; we mourn the profession's loss of his talent as well as our loss of an engaging and lovable friend.

Robert Venturi

Credits

Part I

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1
George Hersey, "J.C. Loudon and Architectural Associationism," Architectural Review, July-September, 1968.

2
Allan D'Arcangelo

7, 8
Peter Schmitt, Dan Scully

11
Ralph Carlson, Tony Farmer

17
Ron Filson, Martha Wagner

18, 24
Glen Hodges

25
United Aerial Survey

30
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31
Robert Venturi

32
Glen Hodges

33
Giovanni Battista Nolli, Nuova Pianta di Roma Data in Luce da Giambattista Nolli, L'Anno M DCC XLVIII, Rome, 1748. Plate 19.

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Landis Aerial Surveys

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Douglas Southworth

41
Peter Schmitt, Dan Scully

42-49
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50, 51
Ron Filson, Martha Wagner

52
Douglas Southworth

53
Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce

54
Convention Bureau, Las Vegas

55
Ralph Carlson, Tony Farmer

56, 57
Douglas Southworth

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Douglas Southworth

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Las Vegas News Bureau

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United Aerial Survey

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Photo from personal file of John F. Cahlan, Las Vegas, Nevada

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Las Vegas News Bureau

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Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce

232
Glen Hodges

233
Peter Schmitt, Dan Scully

Credits

Part II

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Standard Oil Co., New Jersey

3, 4
Robert Venturi

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6
William Watkins

7
The office of Venturi and Rauch

8
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9
Robert Perron

10-14
William Watkins

15
Robert Venturi

16
Jean Roubier, Paris

18, 19
Learning from Las Vegas studio, Yale University

20
Museo Vaticano, Rome

21, 22
Robert Venturi

23
Chicago Architectural Photographing Company

24
Camera Center, Charlottesville, Virginia, or Dexter Press, Inc., West Nyack, N.Y.

27
Apologies to the photographer whose name we have mislaid

28
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30, 31
Charles Brickbauer

32-34
Learning from Las Vegas studio, Yale University

35, 36
Learning from Levittown studio, Yale University

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Learning from Las Vegas studio, Yale University

39
Denise Scott Brown

40
Byram and Sheer, Ltd

41
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43, 44
David Hirsch

45
William Watkins

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Peter Kidson, Peter Murray, and Paul Thompson, A History of English Architecture, Penguin Books.

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61
Henry Russell-Hitchcock

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Damora

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George Cserna

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Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum

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Peter Papademitriou

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70
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71
Learning from Levittown studio, Yale University, Evan Lanman

72
Learning from Levittown studio, Yale University

73
Las Vegas News Bureau

74
Robert Venturi

Credits

Part III
All drawings unless otherwise noted are by Venturi and Rauch

2, 3
David Hirsch

5, 6
Norman McGrath

9
George Pohl

15, 16
George Pohl

31
Laurin McCracken and Douglas Peel

32, 33
Manfred Ibel

36, 37
Louis Reens

38
Philadelphia College of Art,
Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Steven Izenour, David Manker

39-61
Steven Izenour

66-71
With the assistance of Ueland and Junker

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C. Hadley Smith

73
George Pohl

84
George Pohl

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Stephen Hill

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Caudill Rowlett Scott

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Great Western United Corporation

PART I

A SIGNIFICANCE FOR A&P PARKING LOTS, OR LEARNING FROM LAS VEGAS

A Significance for A&P Parking Lots, or Learning from Las Vegas

Substance for a writer consists not merely of those realities he thinks he discovers; it consists even more of those realities which have been made available to him by the literature and idioms of his own day and by the images that still have vitality in the literature of the past. Stylistically, a writer can express his feeling about this substance either by imitation, if it sits well with him, or by parody, if it doesn't.[1]

Learning from the existing landscape is a way of being revolutionary for an architect. Not the obvious way, which is to tear down Paris and begin again, as Le Corbusier suggested in the 1920s, but another, more tolerant way; that is, to question how we look at things.

The commercial strip, the Las Vegas Strip in particular — the example par excellence — challenges the architect to take a positive, non-chip-on-the-shoulder view. Architects are out of the habit of looking nonjudgmentally at the environment, because orthodox Modern architecture is progressive, if not revolutionary, utopian, and puristic; it is dissatisfied with existing conditions. Modern architecture has been anything but permissive: Architects have preferred to change the existing environment rather than enhance what is there.

But to gain insight from the commonplace is nothing new: Fine art often follows folk art. Romantic architects of the eighteenth century discovered an existing and conventional rustic architecture. Early Modern architects appropriated an existing and conventional industrial vocabulary without much adaptation. Le Corbusier loved grain elevators and steamships; the Bauhaus looked like a factory; Mies refined the details of American steel factories for concrete buildings. Modern architects work through analogy, symbol, and image — although they have gone to lengths to disclaim almost all determinants of their forms except structural necessity and the program — and they derive insights, analogies, and stimulation from unexpected images. There is a perversity in the learning process: We look backward at history and tradition to go forward; we can also look downward to go upward. And withholding judgment may be used as a tool to make later judgment more sensitive. This is a way of learning from everything.

Commercial Values and Commercial Methods

Las Vegas is analyzed here only as a phenomenon of architectural communication. Just as an analysis of the structure of a Gothic cathedral need not include a debate on the morality of medieval religion, so Las Vegas's values are not questioned here. The morality of commercial advertising, gambling interests, and the competitive instinct is not at issue here, although, indeed, we believe it should be in the architect's broader, synthetic tasks of which an analysis such as this is but one aspect. The analysis of a drive-in church in this context would match that of a drive-in

1. Richard Poirier, "T. S. Eliot and the Literature of Waste," The New Republic (May 20, 1967), p. 21.

A STUDIO RESEARCH PROBLEM

School of Art and Architecture, Yale University, Fall 1968

Joint authors:
Robert Venturi
Denise Scott Brown
Steven Izenour

Students:
Ralph Carlson
Tony Farmer
Ron Filson
Glen Hodges
Peter Hoyt
Charles Korn
John Kranz
Peter Schlaifer
Peter Schmitt
Dan Scully
Doug Southworth
Martha Wagner
Tony Zunino

The studio programs and work topics were designed by Denise Scott Brown. Portions of them are quoted in this column. Excerpts from writings by students have their names appended.

This has been a technical studio. We are evolving new tools: analytical tools for understanding new space and form, and graphic tools for representing them. Don't bug us for lack of social concern. We are trying to train ourselves to offer socially relevant skills.

restaurant, because this is a study of method, not content. Analysis of one of the architectural variables in isolation from the others is a respectable scientific and humanistic activity, so long as all are resynthesized in design. Analysis of existing American urbanism is a socially desirable activity to the extent that it teaches us architects to be more understanding and less authoritarian in the plans we make for both inner-city renewal and new development.

In addition, there is no reason why the methods of commercial persuasion and the skyline of signs analyzed here should not serve the purpose of civic and cultural enhancement. But this is not entirely up to the architect.

Billboards Are Almost All Right

Architects who can accept the lessons of primitive vernacular architecture, so easy to take in an exhibit like "Architecture without Architects," and of industrial, vernacular architecture, so easy to adapt to an electronic and space vernacular as elaborate neo-Brutalist or neo-Constructivist megastructures, do not easily acknowledge the validity of the commercial vernacular. For the artist, creating the new may mean choosing the old or the existing. Pop artists have relearned this. Our acknowledgment of existing, commercial architecture at the scale of the highway is within this tradition.

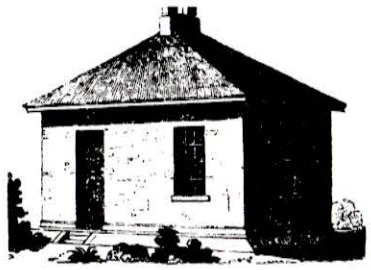
Modern architecture has not so much excluded the commercial vernacular as it has tried to take it over by inventing and enforcing a vernacular of its own, improved and universal. It has rejected the combination of fine art and crude art. The Italian landscape has always harmonized the vulgar and the Vitruvian: the contorni around the duomo, the portiere's laundry across the padrone's portone, Supercortemaggiore against the Romanesque apse. Naked children have never played in our fountains, and I. M. Pei will never be happy on Route 66.

Architecture as Space

Architects have been bewitched by a single element of the Italian landscape: the piazza. Its traditional, pedestrian-scaled, and intricately enclosed space is easier to take than the spatial sprawl of Route 66 and Los Angeles. Architects have been brought up on Space, and enclosed space is the easiest to handle. During the last 40 years, theorists of Modern architecture (Wright and Le Corbusier sometimes excepted) have focused on space as the essential ingredient that separates architecture from painting, sculpture, and literature. Their definitions glory in the uniqueness of the medium; although sculpture and painting may sometimes be allowed spatial characteristics, sculptural or pictorial architecture is unacceptable — because Space is sacred.

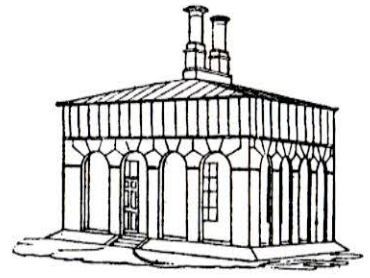
Purist architecture was partly a reaction against nineteenth-century eclecticism. Gothic churches, Renaissance banks, and Jacobean manors were frankly picturesque.[1] The mixing of styles meant the mixing of media. Dressed in

1. "A Dwelling for a Man and his Wife, without children" from Loudon's Encyclopedia . . . "with trellis, with Castellated Gothic jacket, with Monastic Gothic jacket, with Elizabethan jacket . . . "

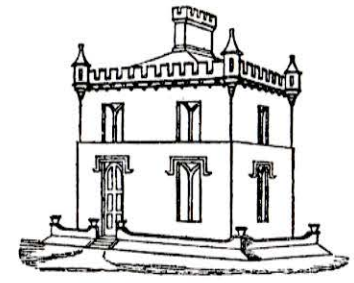


16, *'A Dwelling for a Man and his Wife, without Children' from Loudon's Encyclopedia . . .*

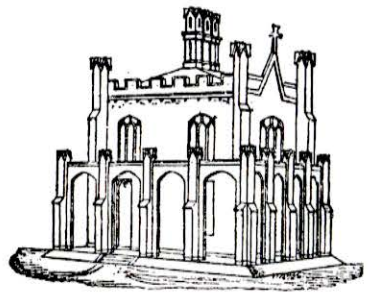
. . . 18, *with veranda and terrace . . .*



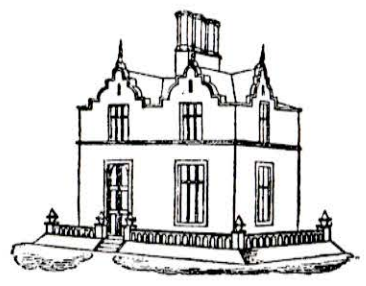
. . . 19, *with trellis . . .*



. . . 20, *with Castellated Gothic jacket . . .*



. . . 21, *with Monastic Gothic jacket . . .*



. . . 22, *with Elizabethan jacket.*

historical styles, buildings evoked explicit associations and Romantic allusions to the past to convey literary, ecclesiastical, national, or programmatic symbolism. Definitions of architecture as space and form at the service of program and structure were not enough. The overlapping of disciplines may have diluted the architecture, but it enriched the meaning.

Modern architects abandoned a tradition of iconology in which painting, sculpture, and graphics were combined with architecture. The delicate hieroglyphics on a bold pylon, the archetypal inscriptions of a Roman architrave, the mosaic processions in Sant' Apollinare, the ubiquitous tattoos over a Giotto chapel, the enshrined hierarchies around a Gothic portal, even the illusionistic frescoes in a Venetian villa, all contain messages beyond their ornamental contribution to architectural space. The integration of the arts in Modern architecture has always been called a good thing. But one did not paint on Mies. Painted panels were floated independently of the structure by means of shadow joints; sculpture was in or near but seldom on the building. Objects of art were used to reinforce architectural space at the expense of their own content. The Kolbe in the Barcelona Pavilion was a foil to the directed spaces: The message was mainly architectural. The diminutive signs in most Modern buildings contained only the most necessary messages, like LADIES, minor accents begrudgingly applied.

Architecture as Symbol

Critics and historians, who documented the "decline of popular symbols" in art, supported orthodox Modern architects, who shunned symbolism of form as an expression or reinforcement of content: meaning was to be communicated, not through allusion to previously known forms, but through the inherent, physiognomic characteristics of form. The creation of architectural form was to be a logical process, free from images of past experience, determined solely by program and structure, with an occasional assist, as Alan Colquhoun has suggested,[2] from intuition.

But some recent critics have questioned the possible level of content to be derived from abstract forms. Others have demonstrated that the functionalists, despite their protestations, derived a formal vocabulary of their own, mainly from current art movements and the industrial vernacular; and latter-day followers such as the Archigram group have turned, while similarly protesting, to Pop Art and the space industry. However, most critics have slighted a continuing iconology in popular commercial art, the persuasive heraldry that pervades our environment from the advertising pages of the New Yorker to the superbillboards of Houston. And their theory of the "debasement" of symbolic architecture in nineteenth-century eclecticism has blinded them to the value of the representational architecture along highways. Those who acknowledge this roadside eclecticism denigrate it, because it flaunts the cliché of a decade ago as well

2. Alan Colquhoun, "Typology and Design Method," Arena, Journal of the Architectural Association (June 1967), pp. 11-14.

as the style of a century ago. But why not? Time travels fast today.

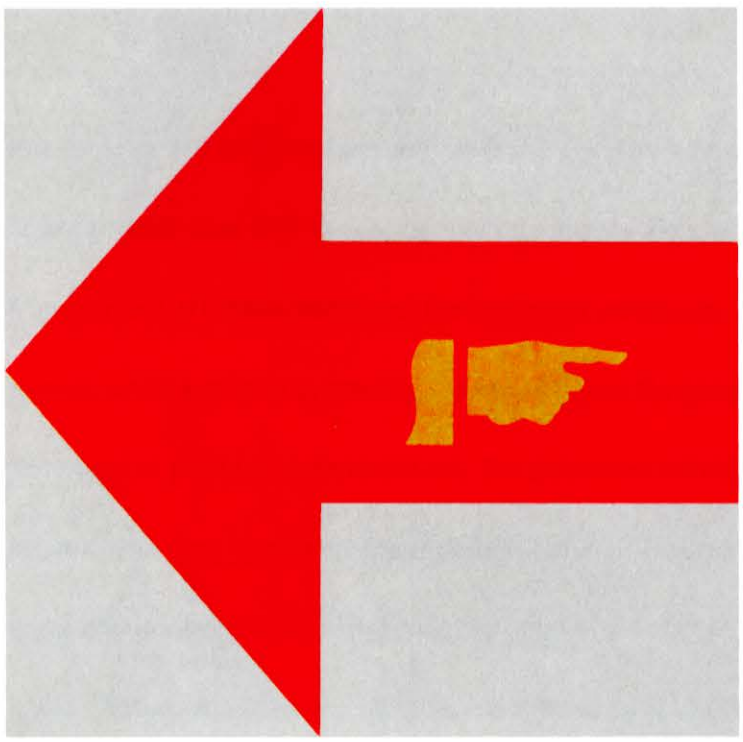
The Miami Beach Modern motel on a bleak stretch of highway in southern Delaware reminds the jaded driver of the welcome luxury of a tropical resort, persuading him, perhaps, to forgo the gracious plantation across the Virginia border called Motel Monticello. The real hotel in Miami alludes to the international stylishness of a Brazilian resort, which, in turn, derives from the International Style of middle Corbu. This evolution from the high source through the middle source to the low source took only 30 years. Today, the middle source, the neo-Eclectic architecture of the 1940s and the 1950s, is less interesting than its commercial adaptations. Roadside copies of Ed Stone are more interesting than the real Ed Stone.

Symbol in Space Before Form in Space: Las Vegas as a Communication System

The sign for the Motel Monticello, a silhouette of an enormous Chippendale highboy, is visible on the highway before the motel itself. This architecture of styles and signs is antispatial; it is an architecture of communication over space; communication dominates space as an element in the architecture and in the landscape. But it is for a new scale of landscape. The philosophical associations of the old eclecticism evoked subtle and complex meanings to be savored in the docile spaces of a traditional landscape. The commercial persuasion of roadside eclecticism provokes bold impact in the vast and complex setting of a new landscape of big spaces, high speeds, and complex programs. Styles and signs make connections among many elements, far apart and seen fast. The message is basely commercial; the context is basically new.

A driver 30 years ago could maintain a sense of orientation in space. At the simple crossroad a little sign with an arrow confirmed what he already knew. He knew where he was. Today the crossroad is a cloverleaf. To turn left he must turn right, a contradiction poignantly evoked in the print by Allan D'Arcangelo.[2] But the driver has no time to ponder paradoxical subtleties within a dangerous, sinuous maze. He relies on signs to guide him — enormous signs in vast spaces at high speeds.

The dominance of signs over space at a pedestrian scale occurs in big airports. Circulation in a big railroad station required little more than a simple axial system from taxi to train, by ticket window, stores, waiting room, and platform — all virtually without signs. Architects object to signs in buildings: "If the plan is clear, you can see where to go." But complex programs and settings require complex combinations of media beyond the purer architectural triad of structure, form, and light at the service of space. They suggest an architecture of bold communication rather than one of subtle expression.



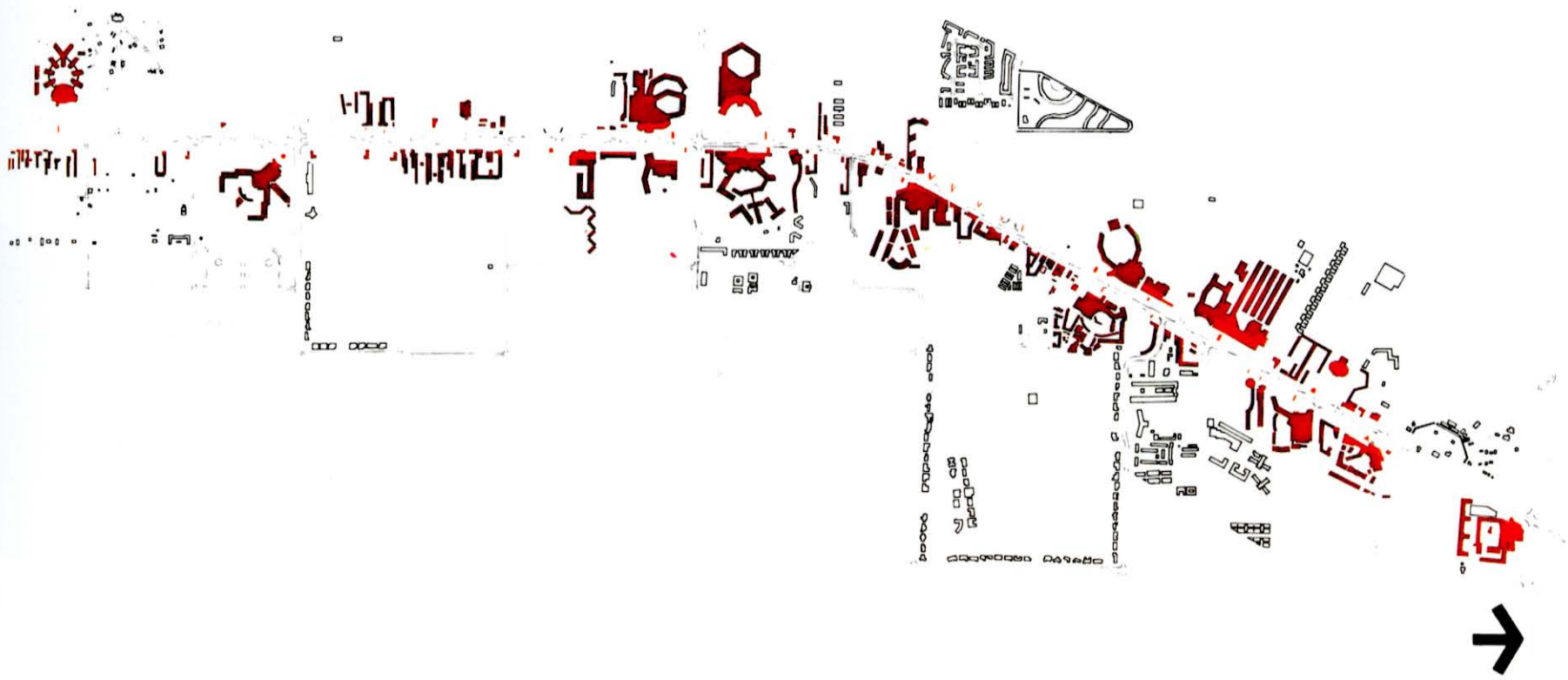
2. The trip. Allan D'Arcangelo

LAS VEGAS AS A COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

[3-6] WELCOME TO FABULOUS LAS VEGAS, FREE ASPIRIN — ASK US ANYTHING, VACANCY, GAS.

All cities communicate messages — functional, symbolic, and persuasive — to people as they move about. Las Vegas signs hit you at the California border and before you land at the airport. On the Strip three message systems [7] exist: the heraldic (the signs) dominates; the [8] physiognomic, the messages given by the faces of the buildings (the continuous balconies and regularly spaced picture windows of the Dunes saying [9] HOTEL and the suburban bungalows converted to chapels by the [10] addition of a steeple); and the locational (service [11, 12] stations are found on corner lots, the casino is in front of the hotel, and the ceremonial valet parking is in front of the casino). All three message systems are closely interrelated on the Strip. Sometimes they are combined, as when the facade of a casino becomes one big sign or the shape of [13, 14] the building reflects its name, and the sign, in turn, reflects the shape. Is the sign the building or the building the sign?[15] These relationships, and combinations between signs and buildings, between architecture and symbolism, between form and meaning, between driver and the roadside are deeply relevant to architecture today and have been discussed at length by several writers. But they have not been studied in detail or as an overall system. The students of urban perception and imageability have ignored them, and there is some evidence that the Strip would confound their theories. How is it that in spite of "noise" from competing signs we do in fact find what we want on the Strip? Also, we have no good graphic tools for depicting the Strip as message giver. How can the visual importance of the Stardust sign be mapped at 1 inch to 100 feet?

7. Map of Las Vegas Strip showing heraldic symbolism



8. Map of Las Vegas (detail) showing heraldic and physiognomic communication: Orange represents heraldic; purple represents physiognomic.

9. Dunes Casino and Hotel, Las Vegas

10. Wedding chapel, Las Vegas

11. Map of Las Vegas Strip showing location of signs by use (detail)

12. Corner gas stations. Lower Strip, Las Vegas

13. Stardust Casino and Hotel, Las Vegas

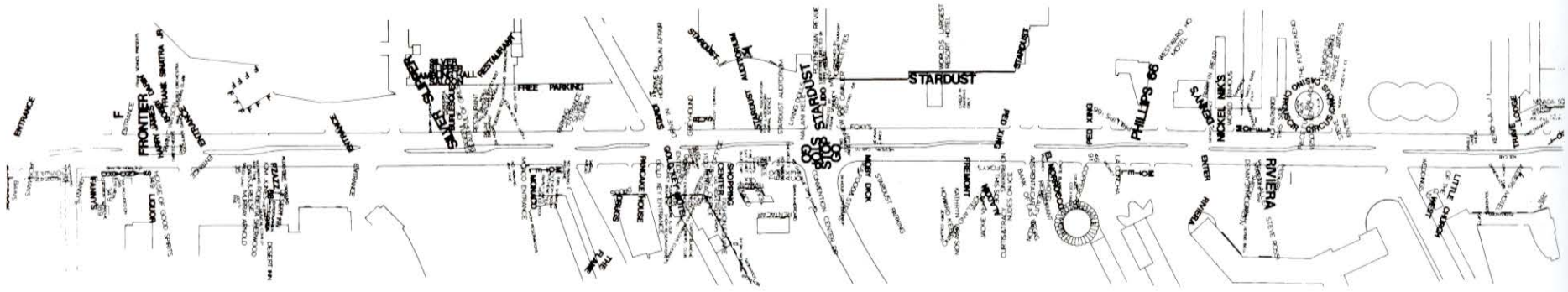
14. Stardust Casino and Hotel, Las Vegas

15. La Concha Motel, Las Vegas

16. Night messages

17. Map of Las Vegas Strip (detail) showing every written word seen from the road

18. A comparative analysis of directional spaces



DIRECTIONAL SPACE

SPACE · SCALE
section 1 in.: 50 ft.

SPEED

SYMBOL
sign·symbol·bldg. ratio

EASTERN BAZAAR		3 M.P.H.	
MEDIEVAL STREET		3 M.P.H.	
MAIN STREET		3 M.P.H. 20 M.P.H.	W
COMMERCIAL STRIP		35 M.P.H.	
THE STRIP		35 M.P.H.	
SHOPPING CENTER		3 M.P.H. 50 M.P.H.	

SPACE · SCALE · SPEED · SYMBOL

The Architecture of Persuasion

The cloverleaf and airport communicate with moving crowds in cars or on foot for efficiency and safety. But words and symbols may be used in space for commercial persuasion.[16, 17] The Middle Eastern bazaar contains no signs; the Strip is virtually all signs.[18] In the bazaar, communication works through proximity. Along its narrow aisles, buyers feel and smell the merchandise, and the merchant applies explicit oral persuasion. In the narrow streets of the medieval town, although signs occur, persuasion is mainly through the sight and smell of the real cakes through the doors and windows of the bakery. On Main Street, shop-window displays for pedestrians along the sidewalks and exterior signs, perpendicular to the street for motorists, dominate the scene almost equally.

On the commercial strip the supermarket windows contain no merchandise. There may be signs announcing the day's bargains, but they are to be read by pedestrians approaching from the parking lot. The building itself is set back from the highway and half hidden, as is most of the urban environment, by parked cars.[19] The vast parking lot is in front, not at the rear, since it is a symbol as well as a convenience. The building is low because air conditioning demands low spaces, and merchandising techniques discourage second floors; its architecture is neutral because it can hardly be seen from the road. Both merchandise and architecture are disconnected from the road. The big sign leaps to connect the driver to the store,[20, 21] and down the road the cake mixes and detergents are advertised by their national manufacturers on enormous billboards inflected toward the highway.[22] The graphic sign in space has become the architecture of this landscape. Inside, the A&P has reverted to the bazaar except that graphic packaging has replaced the oral persuasion of the merchant. At another scale, the shopping center off the highway returns in its pedestrian malls to the medieval street.

19. Parking lot of a suburban supermarket

20, 21. "The big sign leaps to connect the driver . . . "

22. Tanya billboard on the Strip

In The View From the Road, Appleyard, Lynch, and Myer describe the driving experience as "a sequence played to the eyes of a captive, somewhat fearful, but partially inattentive audience, whose vision is filtered and directed forward."[3]

3. Donald Appleyard, Kevin Lynch, and John R. Myer, The View From the Road (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1963), p. 5.

Movement perception along a road is within a structural order of constant elements — the road, sky, lamppost spacing, and yellow stripes. A person can orient himself to this, while the rest just happens! Lynch found that more than half the objects sighted along a road by both drivers and passengers are seen straight ahead and narrowly to the sides, as if with blinders. (That is[23] why the sign must be big and must be along the road.) About one-third of the attention is off to the immediate sides. Attention is also more focused on "moving" objects than on "stable" ones, except when the observer passes a visual barrier and, in order to reorient himself, surveys a new landscape. Speed is the determinant of focal angle, both for driver and passengers. Increases of speed narrow the focal angle with a resulting visual shift from detail to generality; attention shifts to points of decision. The body sensations of speed are few in a car. We depend upon vision for our perception of speed. Objects that pass overhead greatly increase the sense of speed.

Does Las Vegas make any attempt to control speed — slow down, therefore see more detail, therefore buy? (Daniel Scully and Peter Schmitt)

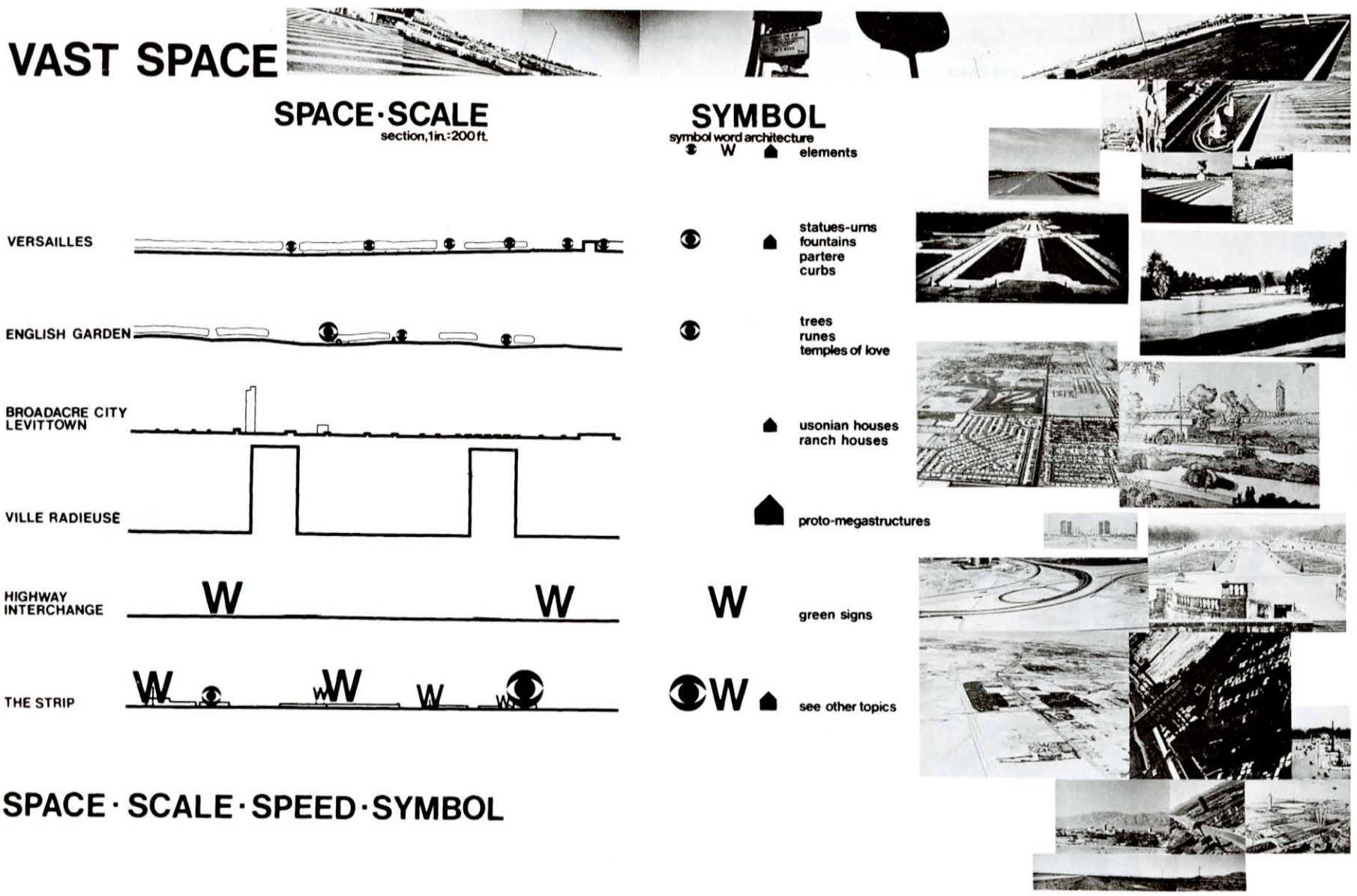
23. Lower Strip, looking north

Vast Space in the Historical Tradition and at the A&P

The A&P parking lot is a current phase in the evolution of vast space since Versailles.[24] The space that divides high-speed highway and low, sparse buildings produces no enclosure and little direction. To move through a piazza is to move between high enclosing forms. To move through this landscape is to move over vast expansive texture: the megatexture of the commercial landscape. The parking lot is the parterre[25] of the asphalt landscape. The patterns of parking lines give direction much as the paving patterns, curbs, borders, and tapis vert give direction in Versailles; grids of lamp posts substitute for obelisks, rows of urns and statues as points of identity and continuity in the vast space.[26, 27] But it is the highway signs through their sculptural forms or pictorial silhouettes, their particular positions in space, their inflected shapes, and their graphic meanings that identify and unify the megatexture.[28] They make verbal and symbolic connections through space, communicating a complexity of meanings through hundreds of associations in few seconds from far away. Symbol dominates space. Architecture is not enough. Because the spatial relationships are made by symbols more than by forms, architecture in this landscape becomes symbol in space rather than form in space. Architecture defines very little: The big sign and the little building is the rule of Route 66.[29]

The Las Vegas Strip eludes our concepts of urban form and space, ancient or modern. It has as little to do with Haussmann as with Ville Radieuse, with Ebenezer Howard as with the Metabolists, with Lynch as with Camillo Sitte or Ian Nairn. Frank Lloyd Wright would have considered it a travesty of Broadacre City, and Maki would probably find it a travesty of "group form." Perhaps Patrick Geddes might have understood, and J. B. Jackson is very much attuned to it.

24. A comparative analysis of vast spaces



Although its buildings suggest a number of historical styles, its urban spaces owe nothing to historical space. Las Vegas space is neither contained and enclosed like medieval space nor classically balanced and proportioned like Renaissance space nor swept up in a rhythmically ordered movement like Baroque space, nor does it flow like Modern space around free-standing urban space makers.

It is something else again. But what? Not chaos, but a new spatial order relating the automobile and highway communication in an architecture which abandons pure form in favor of mixed media. Las Vegas space is so different from the docile spaces for which our analytical and conceptual tools were evolved that we need new concepts and theories to handle it.

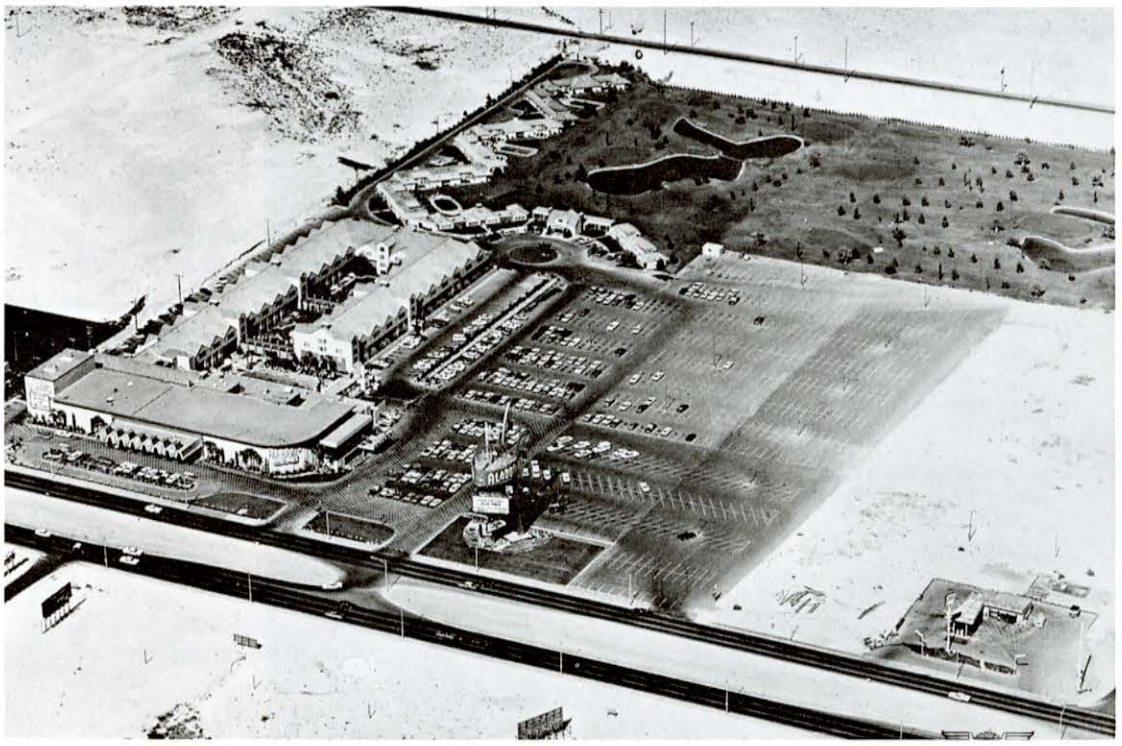
One way of understanding the new form and space is to compare it with the old and the different. Compare Las Vegas with Ville Radieuse and Haussmann's Paris; compare the Strip with a medieval market street; compare Fremont Street, a shopping center, and the pilgrims' way through Rome. Compare a form that "just grew" with its designed equivalent and with "group forms" from other cultures.

Another way of understanding the new form is to describe carefully and then analyze what is there and, from an understanding of the city as is, to evolve new theories and concepts of form more suited to twentieth-century realities and therefore more useful as conceptual tools in design and planning. This approach provides a way out of the CIAM grid. But how does one describe new form and space using techniques derived from the old? What techniques can represent the 60mph form and space of the Strip?

How does its desert site affect Las Vegas form and space?

Do Las Vegas public and institutional buildings show any influences from its recreational architecture?

25. Aladdin Casino and Hotel, Las Vegas. An asphalt landscape

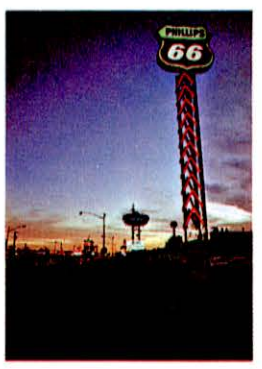


26. Versailles

27. Parking lot of Caesars Palace, Las Vegas

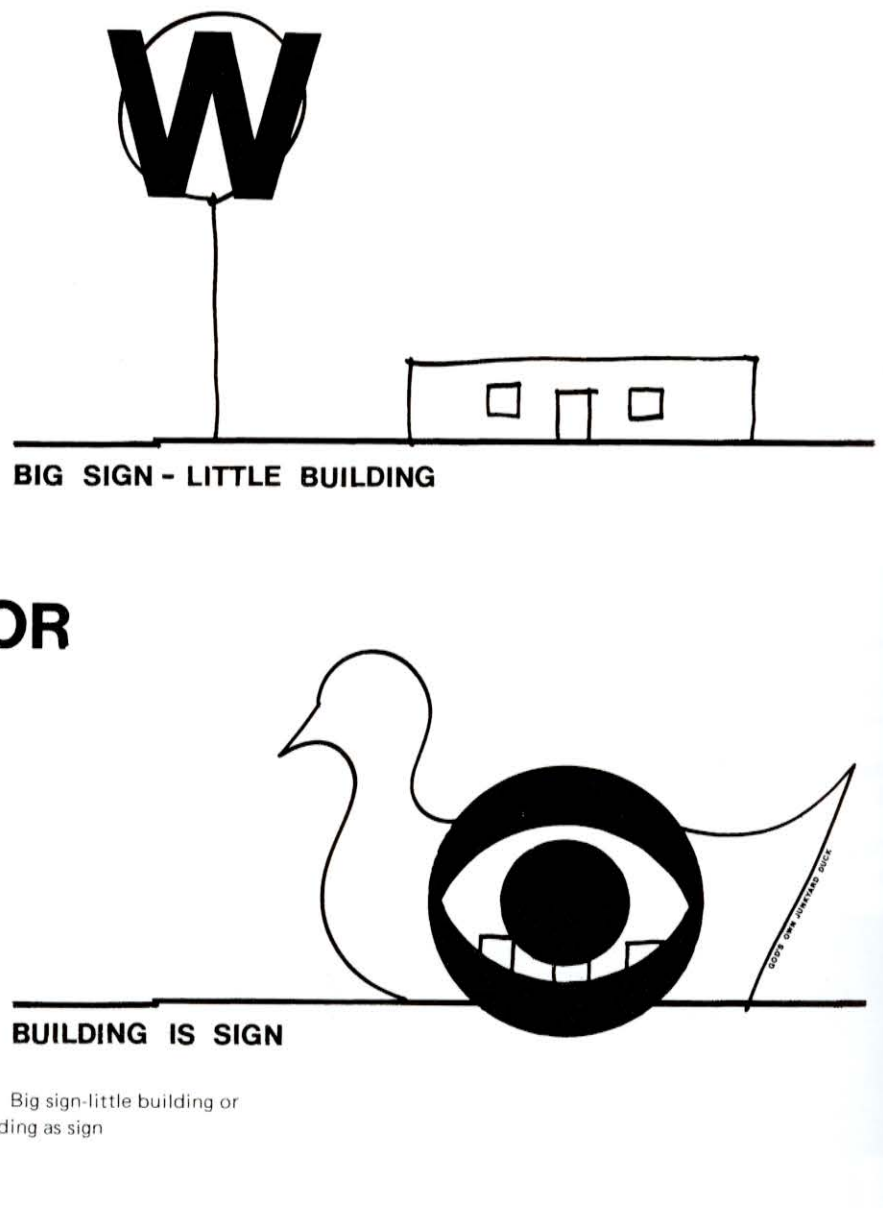
28. Inflected highway signs on the Strip

29. "The big sign and the little building . . ."



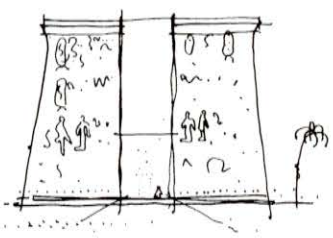
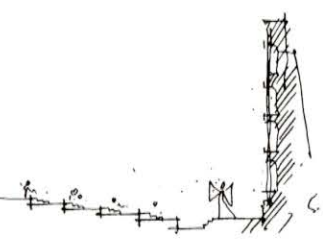
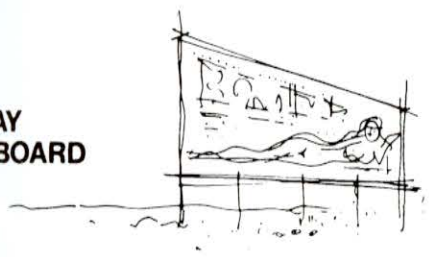
The sign is more important than the architecture. This is reflected in the proprietor's budget: The sign at the front is a vulgar extravaganza, the building at the back, a modest necessity. The architecture is what is cheap. Sometimes the building is the sign: The duck store in the shape of a duck, called "The Long Island Duckling,"[30, 31] is sculptural symbol and architectural shelter. Contradiction between outside and inside was common in architecture before the Modern movement, particularly in urban and monumental architecture.[32] Baroque domes were symbols as well as spatial constructions, and they are bigger in scale and higher outside than inside in order to dominate their urban setting and communicate their symbolic message. The false fronts of western stores did the same thing: They were bigger and taller than the interiors they fronted to communicate the store's importance and to enhance the quality and unity of the street. But false fronts are of the order and scale of Main Street. From the desert town on the highway in the West of today, we can learn new and vivid lessons about an impure architecture of communication. The little low buildings, grey-brown like the desert, separate and recede from the street that is now the highway, their false fronts disengaged and turned perpendicular to the highway as big, high signs. If you take the signs away, there is no place. The desert town is intensified communication along the highway.

30. "The Long Island Duckling"
from God's Own Junkyard



31. Big sign-little building or
building as sign

32. A comparative analysis of "billboards" in space

		SCALE	SPEED	SYMBOL
AMIENS		persuader to enclosed space		
EGYPTIAN PYLON		space divider with civic messages		W
TRIUMPHAL ARCH		complex-space connector		W
ROMAN THEATRE		ambiguous back drop		
HIWAY BILLBOARD		vast-space persuader		W
LAS VEGAS		vast-space connector		W

From Rome to Las Vegas

Las Vegas is the apotheosis of the desert town. Visiting Las Vegas in the mid-1960s was like visiting Rome in the late 1940s. For young Americans in the 1940s, familiar only with the auto-scaled, gridiron city and the antiurban theories of the previous architectural generation, the traditional urban spaces, the pedestrian scale, and the mixtures, yet continuities, of styles of the Italian piazzas were a significant revelation. They rediscovered the piazza. Two decades later architects are perhaps ready for similar lessons about large open space, big scale, and high speed. Las Vegas is to the Strip what Rome is to the Piazza.

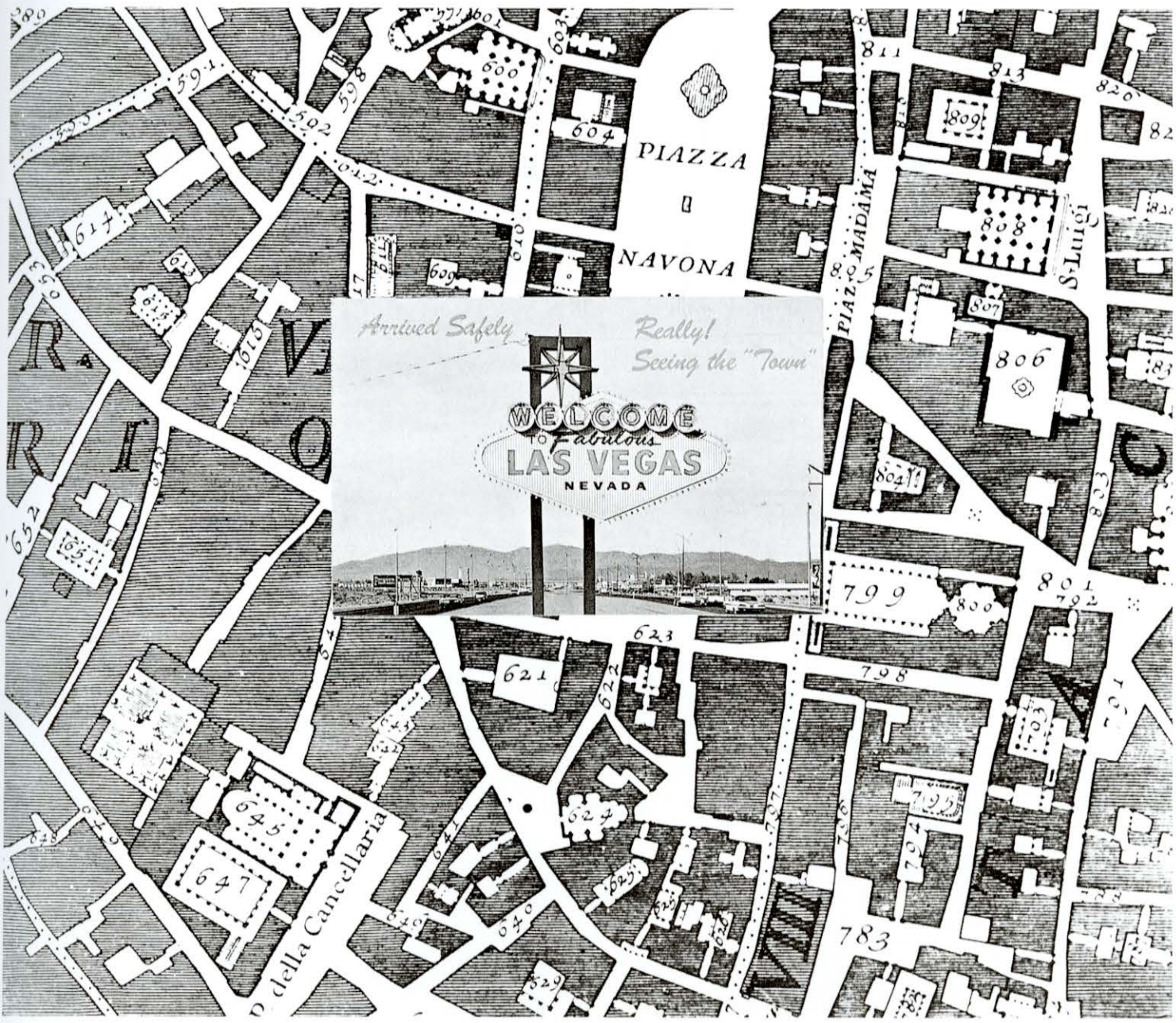
There are other parallels between Rome and Las Vegas: their expansive settings in the Campagna and in the Mojave Desert, for instance, that tend to focus and clarify their images. On the other hand, Las Vegas was built in a day, or rather, the Strip was developed in a virgin desert in a short time. It was not superimposed on an older pattern as was the pilgrim's Rome of the Counter-Reformation and the commercial strips of eastern cities, and it is therefore easier to study. Each city is an archetype rather than a prototype, an exaggerated example from which to derive lessons for the typical. Each city vividly superimposes elements of a supranational scale on the local fabric: churches in the religious capital, casinos and their signs in the entertainment capital. These cause violent juxtapositions of use and scale in both cities. Rome's churches, off streets and piazzas, are open to the public; the pilgrim, religious or architectural, can walk from church to church. The gambler or architect in Las Vegas can similarly take in a variety of casinos along the Strip. The casinos and lobbies of Las Vegas are ornamental and monumental and open to the promenading public; a few old banks and railroad stations excepted, they are unique in American cities. Nolli's map[33] of the mid-eighteenth century reveals the sensitive and complex connections between public and private space in Rome. Private building is shown in grey crosshatching that is carved into by the public spaces, exterior and interior. These spaces, open or roofed, are shown in minute detail through darker poche. Interiors of churches read like piazzas and courtyards of palaces, yet a variety of qualities and scales is articulated.

33. Nolli's Map of Rome (detail)

Maps of Las Vegas

A "Nolli" map of the Las Vegas Strip reveals and clarifies what is public and what is private, but here the scale is enlarged by the inclusion of the parking lot, and the solid-to-void ratio is reversed by the open spaces of the desert. Mapping the Nolli components from an aerial photograph[34] provides an intriguing crosscut of Strip systems. These components, separated and redefined, could be undeveloped land, asphalt, autos, buildings, and ceremonial space.[35-39] Reassembled, they describe the Las Vegas equivalent of the pilgrims' way,[40] although the description, like Nolli's map, misses the iconological dimensions of the experience.[41]

A conventional land-use map of Las Vegas can show the overall structure of commercial use in the city as it relates to other uses[42] but none of the detail of use type or intensity. "Land-use" maps of the insides of casino complexes, however, begin to suggest the systematic planning that all casinos share.[43] Strip "address"[44] and "establishment"[45] maps can depict both intensity and variety of use. Distribution maps show patterns (of churches[46] and food stores[47]) that Las Vegas shares with other cities and those (wedding chapels[48] and auto rental stations[49]) that are Strip-oriented and unique. It is extremely hard to suggest the atmospheric qualities of Las Vegas, because these are primarily dependent on watts,[52] animation, and iconology; however, "message maps,"[50, 51] tourist maps,[53] and brochures[54] suggest some of it.



The representation techniques learned from architecture and planning impede our understanding of Las Vegas. They are static where it is dynamic, contained where it is open, two-dimensional where it is three-dimensional — how do you show the Aladdin sign meaningfully in plan, section, and elevation, or show the Golden Slipper on a land-use plan? Architectural techniques are suitable for large, broad objects in space, like buildings, but not for thin, intense objects, like signs; planning techniques are able to depict activity (land use), but in excessively general categories, for the ground floor only, and without intensity.

We need techniques for abstracting, for example, to represent "twin phenomena" or to demonstrate concepts and generalized schema — an archetypal casino or a piece of the urban fabric — rather than specific buildings. The pretty photographs that we and other tourists made in Las Vegas are not enough.

How do you distort these to draw out a meaning for a designer? How do you differentiate on a plan between form that is to be specifically built as shown and that which is, within constraints, allowed to happen? How do you represent the Strip as perceived by Mr. A. rather than as a piece of geometry? How do you show quality of light — or qualities of form — in plan at 1 inch to 100 feet? How do you show fluxes and flows, or seasonal variation, or change with time?

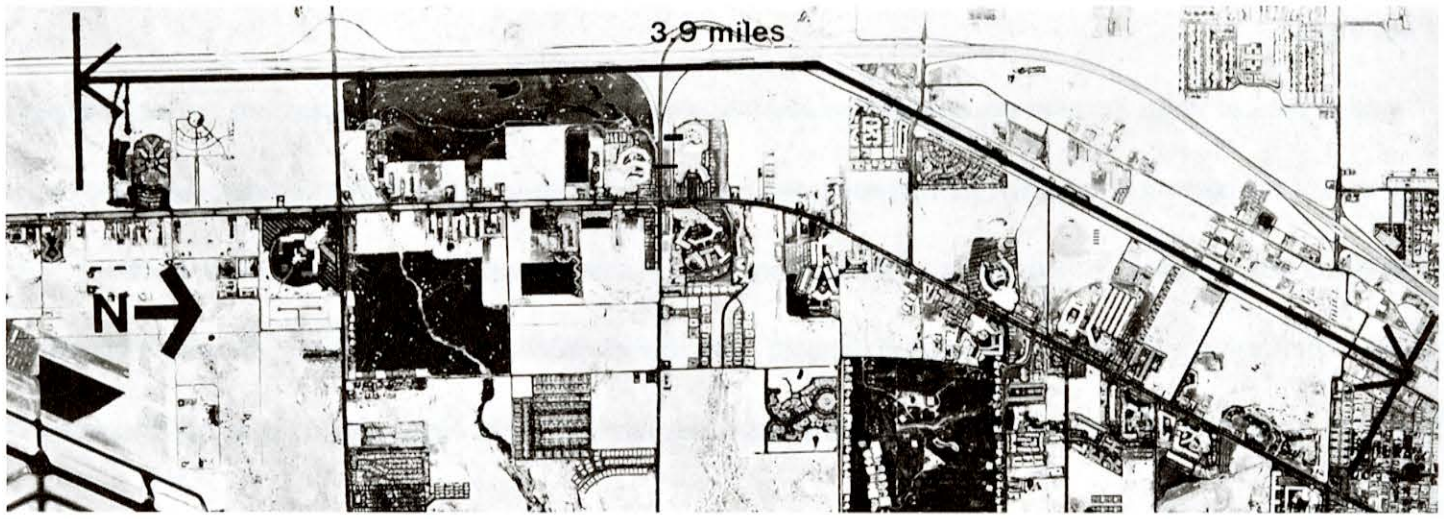
34-40. Nolli's Map of Las Vegas

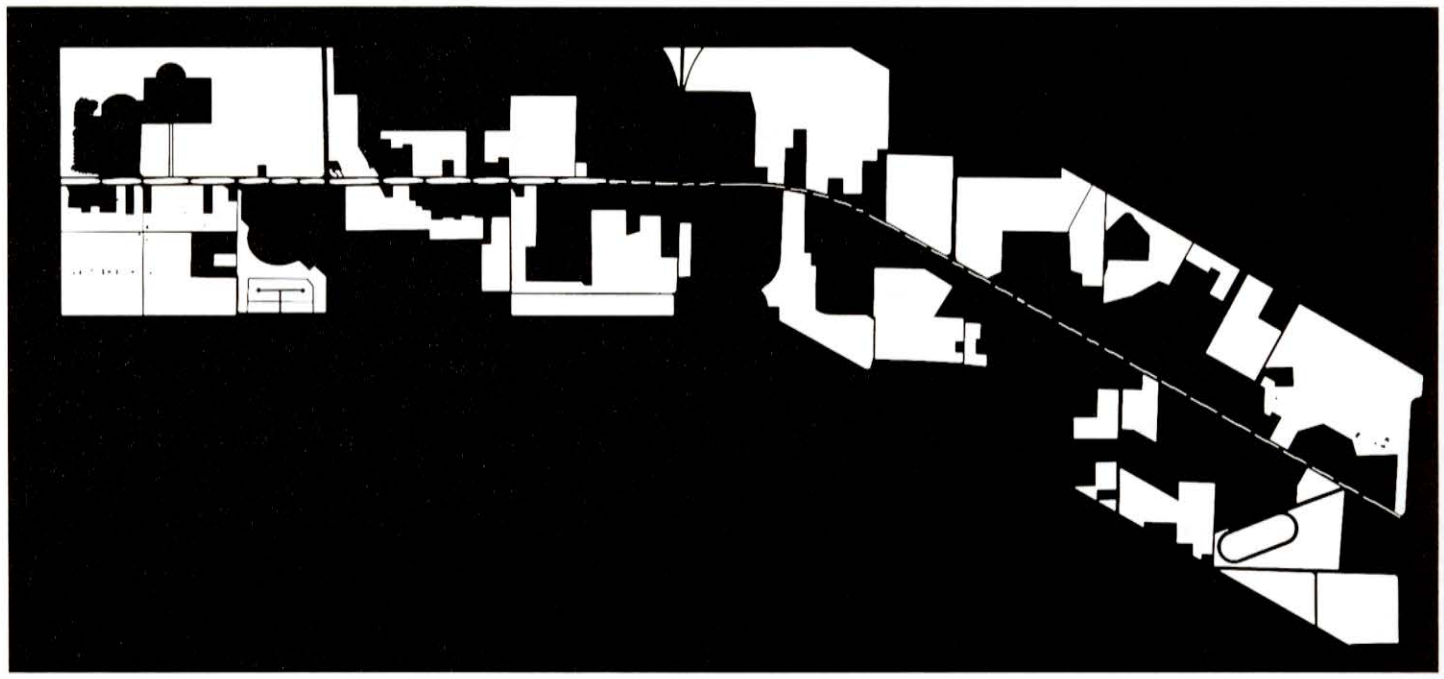
34. Aerial photograph of upper Strip

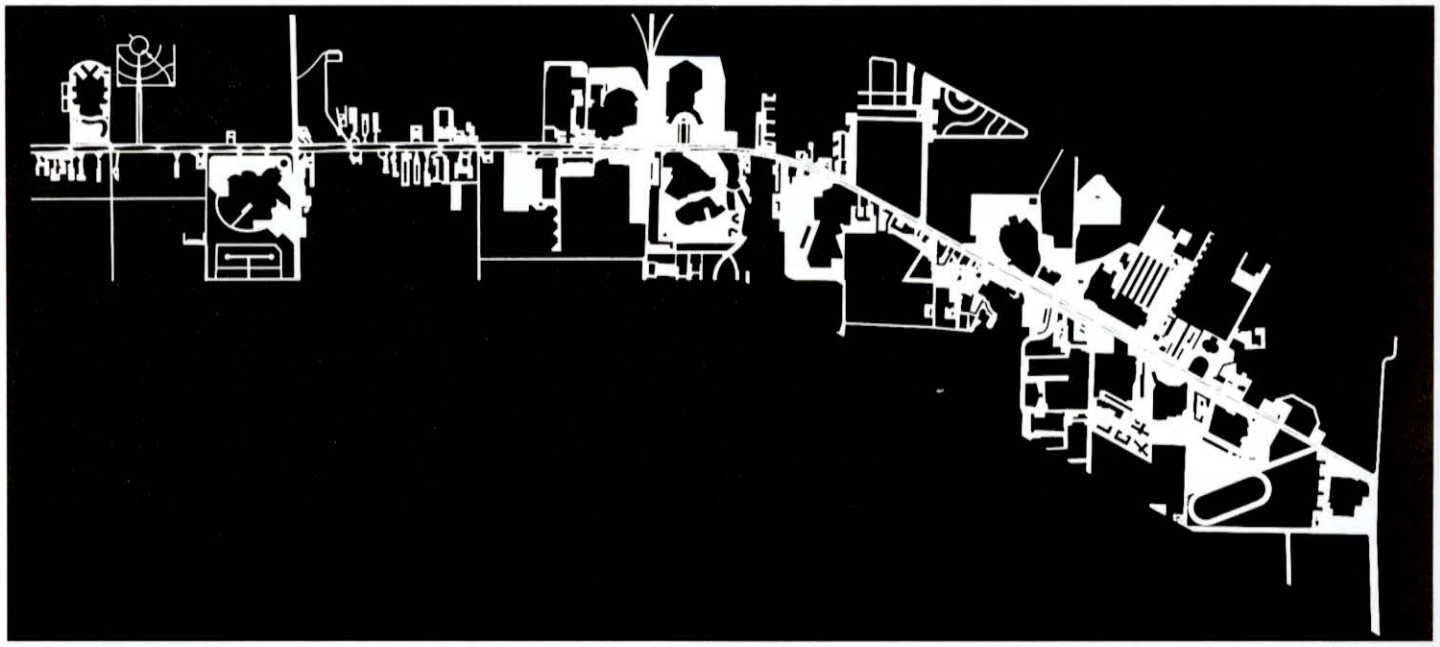
35. Undeveloped land

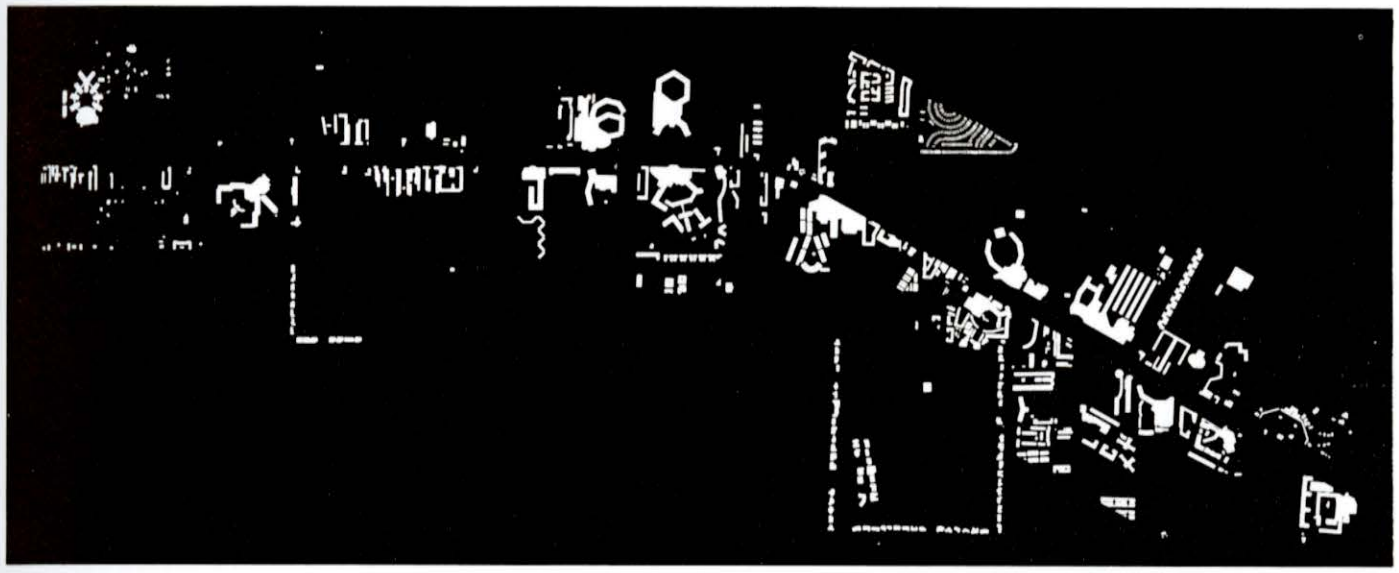
36. Asphalt

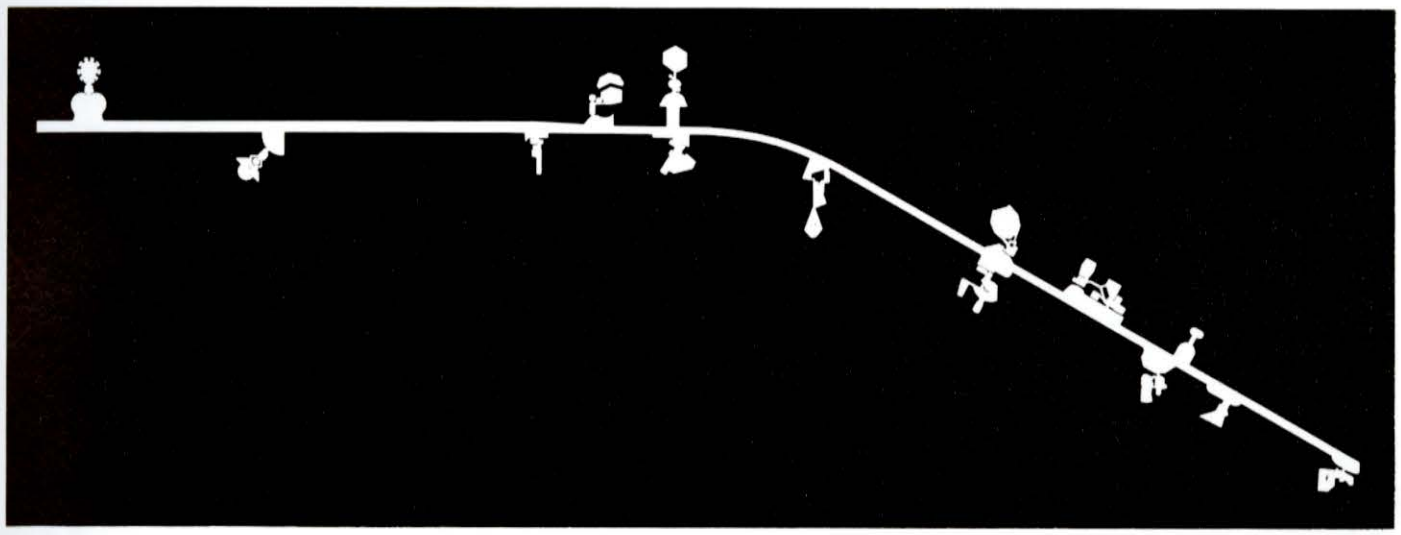
37. Autos

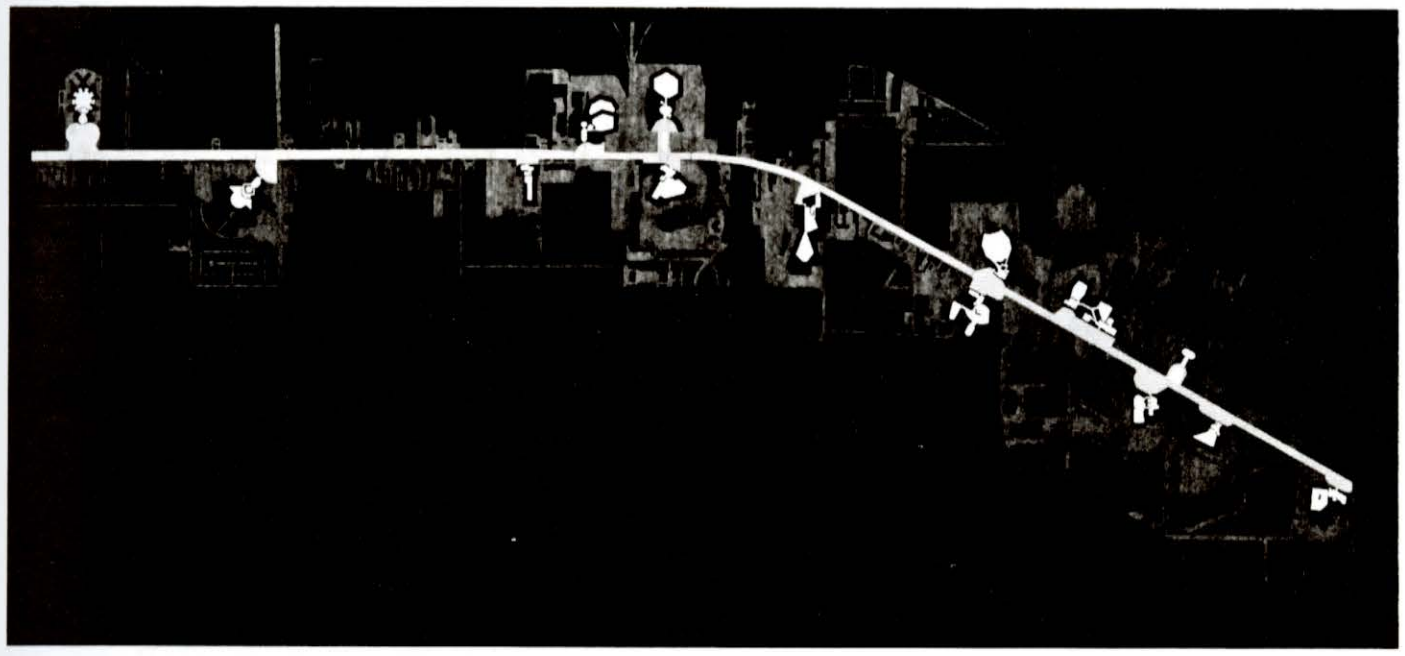












LAS VEGAS AS A PATTERN OF ACTIVITIES

A city is a set of intertwined activities that form a pattern on the land. The Las Vegas Strip is not a chaotic sprawl but a set of activities whose pattern, as with other cities, depends on the technology of movement and communication and the economic value of land. We term it sprawl, because it is a new pattern we have not yet understood. The aim here is for us as designers to derive an understanding of this new pattern.

The questions are: How can the traditional city planning methods for depicting activity patterns (land-use and transportation maps) be adapted to a city such as Las Vegas? How can they be made useful as inspiration sources and design tools for urban designers? What other methods are there for coming to an understanding of the city as an activity system?

In search of answers, we shall experiment with different techniques for representing the following:

1. Las Vegas and the Strip as phenomena in the space economy, national and local.
2. Land use and intensity of use for the region in general and the Strip in detail.
3. The linkages between activities on and around the Strip.
4. Movement and stopping systems for auto, transit, pedestrian, rail, and air for the region and for pedestrian, transit, and auto for the Strip.
5. Volume and flow of different types of traffic at different time periods.
6. The relation between activities and movement at different scales along the Strip.
7. The Strip as recreation system, a promenade.

These studies will give us a broad understanding of why things are where they are in Las Vegas.

38. Buildings

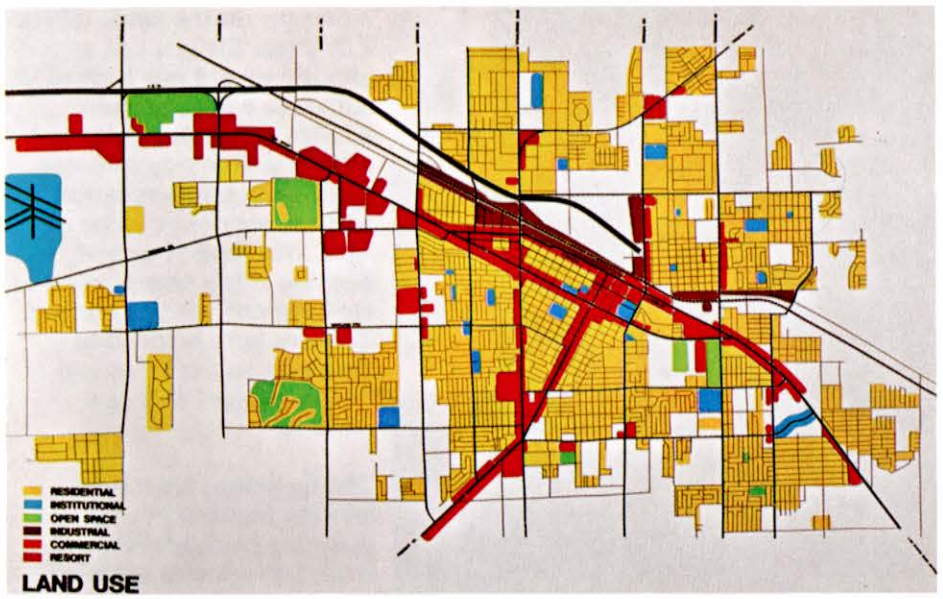
39. Ceremonial space

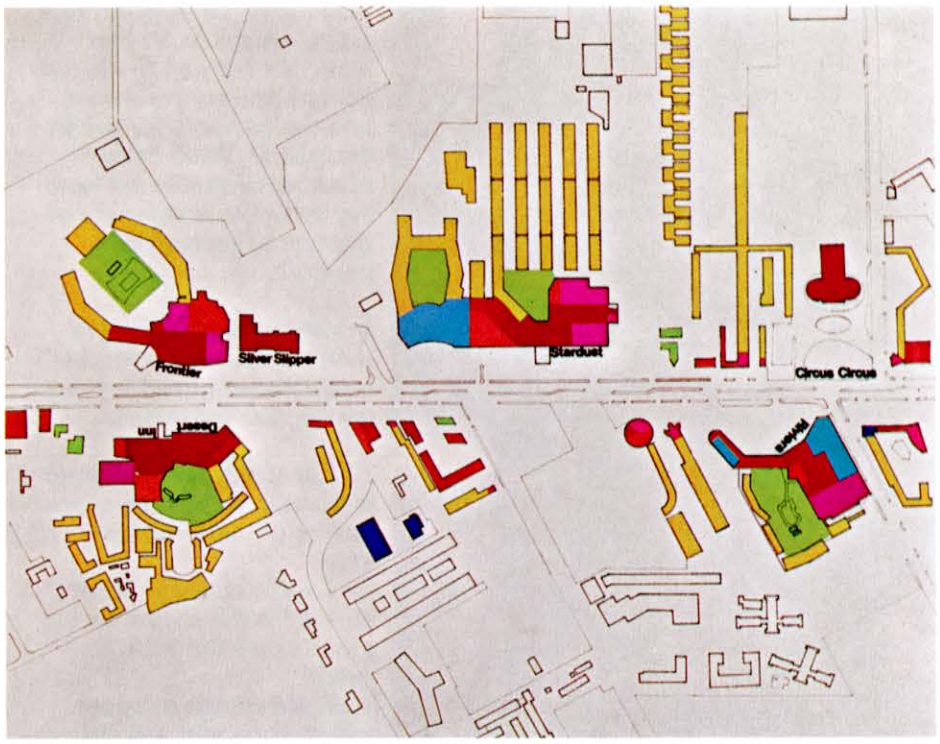
40. Nolli's Las Vegas

41. Map of Las Vegas Strip showing intensity of communication by building type; suggests how the quality of space between road and building or sign is intensified at night.

42. A conventional land use map of Las Vegas

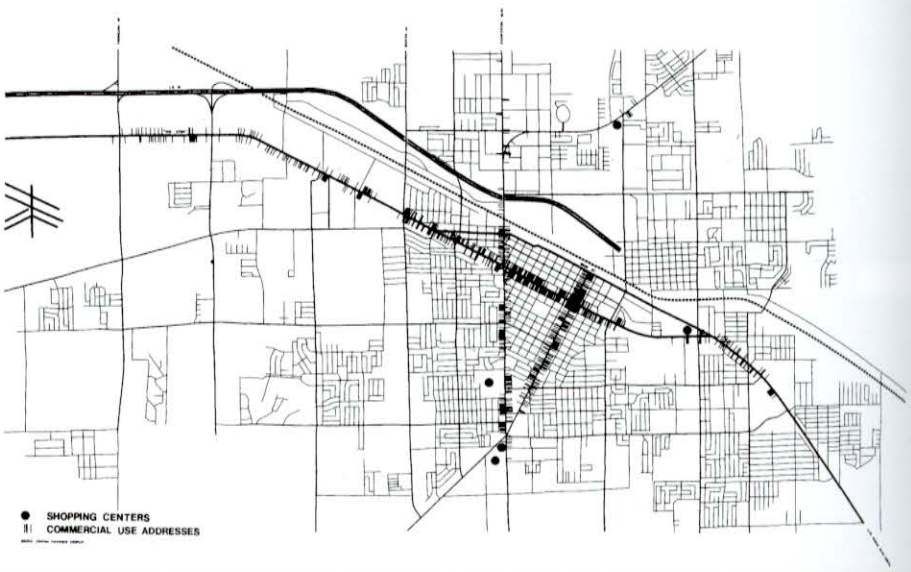
43. Map of Las Vegas Strip (detail) showing uses within buildings

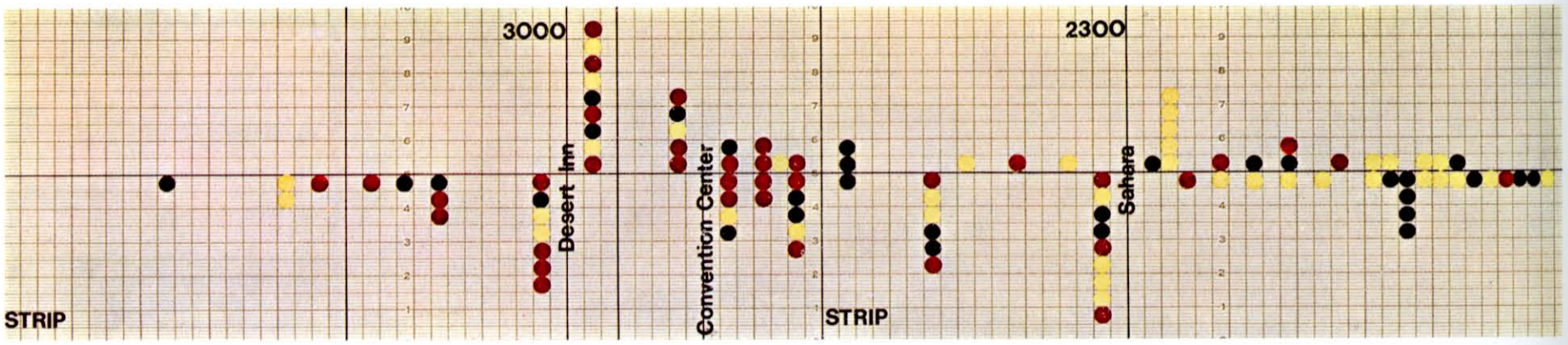


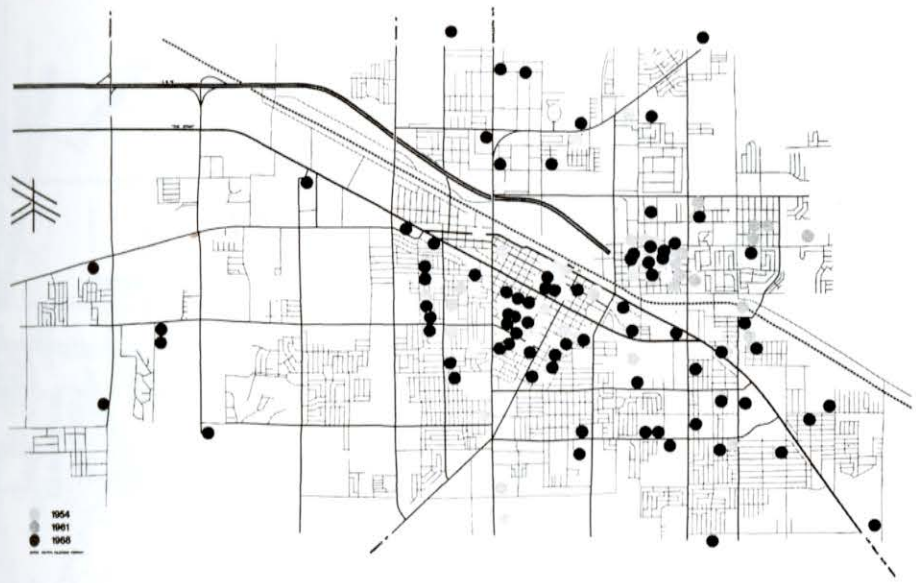


44. Map showing location of ground floor commercial establishments (1961) on three Las Vegas Strips

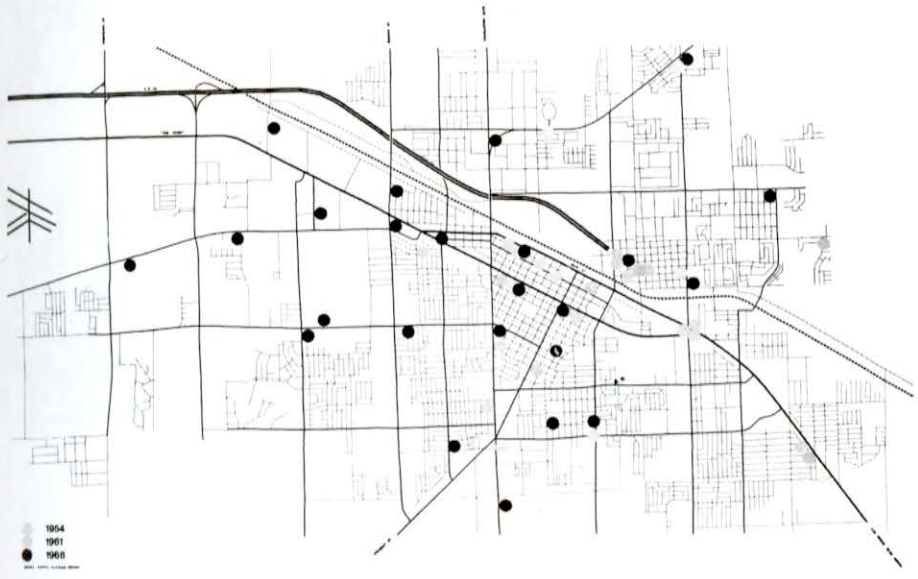
45. Map of Las Vegas Strip (detail) showing different commercial establishments at the same address



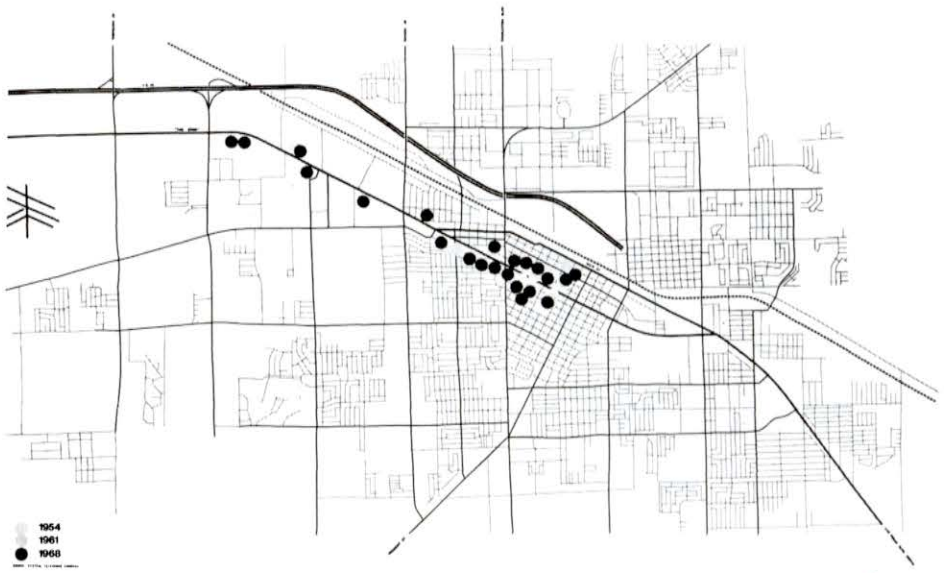




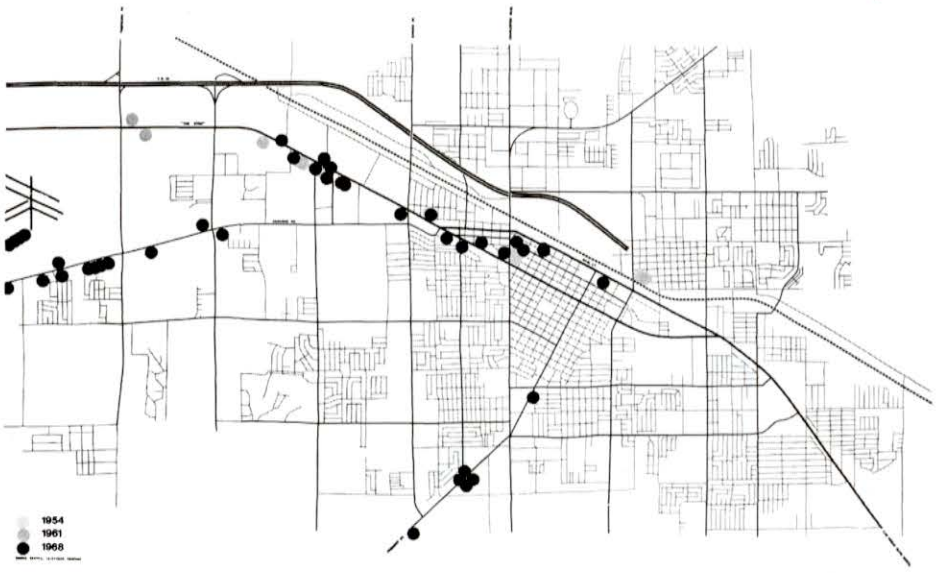
46. Map of Las Vegas showing distribution of churches



47. Food stores



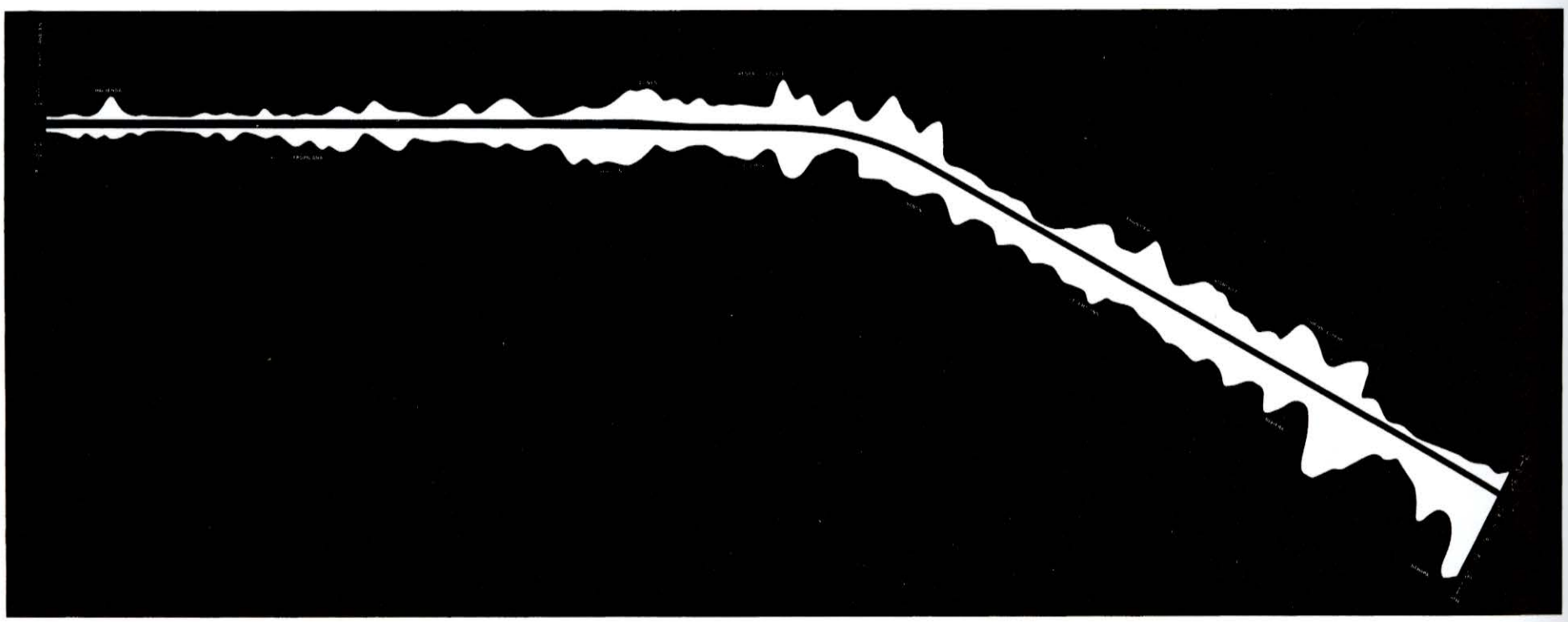
48. Wedding chapels

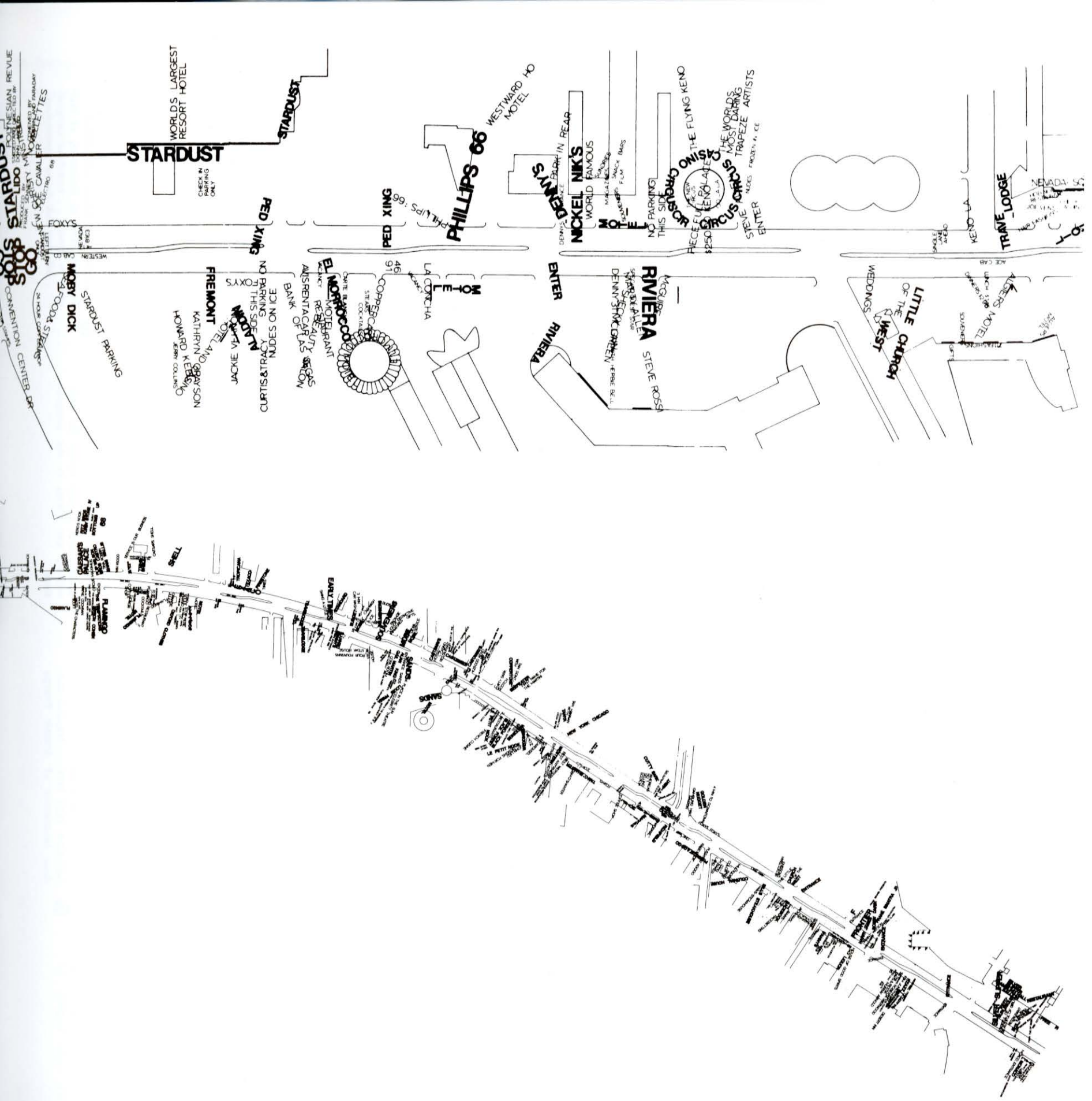


49. Auto rentals

50, 51. Map of Las Vegas Strip showing every written word seen from the road

52. Illumination levels on the Strip



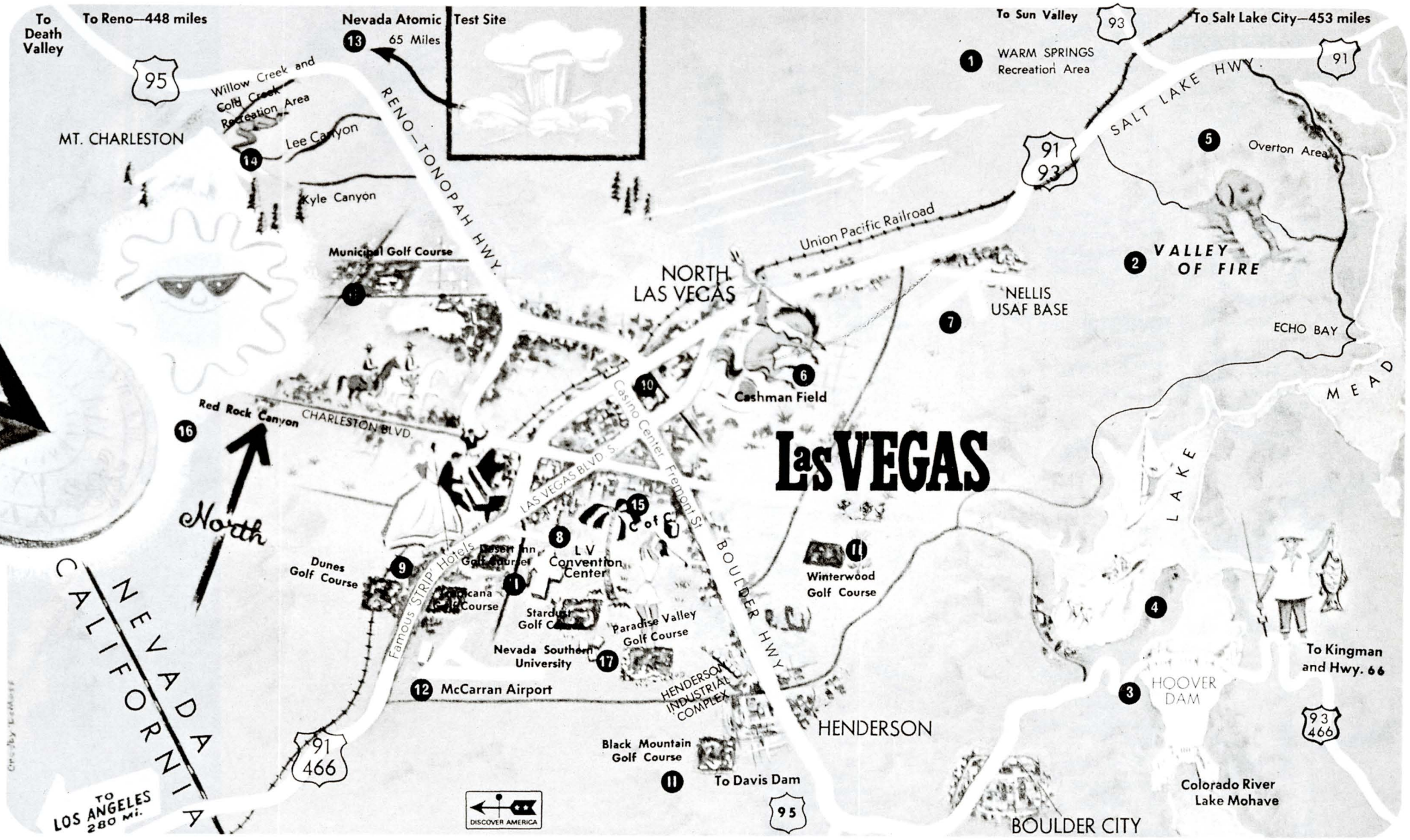

STARDUST
WORLDS LARGEST RESORT HOTEL
STARDUST
CHECK IN PARKING ONLY
PED XING
PHILLIPS 66
WESTWARD HO MOTEL
DENNY'S
NICKEL NIK'S
WORLD FAMOUS
NO PARKING THIS SIDE
CIRCUS CIRCUS
THE FLYING KENO
THE WORLDS MOST DARING TRAPEZE ARTISTS
STEVE ENTER
KENO LA
TRAVELODGE
NEVADA ST
FOXY'S
MOBY DICK
STARDUST PARKING
FREMONT
HOWARD K EBSON
KATHRYN GRAYSON
ALADDIN
JACKIE VAUGHN
CURTIS&TRACY
NUDES ON ICE
BANK OF LAS VEGAS
EL MORROCCO
MOTEL
LA CONCHA
COPPER CAN
RIVIERA
STEVE ROSS
WEDDINGS
LITTLE CHURCH OF THE WEST
CONVENTION CENTER DR

On all the maps, of all the world, what place can match the splendor, the variety, the vacation pleasures of Las Vegas? With over 25,000 modern, comfortable motel and hotel rooms, there's a "bundle of fun for everyone." From its surrounding natural wonders, to its man-made "climate" of utter relaxation, Las Vegas is in a class by itself.

Within a few miles, you discover luxurious swimming pools, championship golf courses, glittering show palaces, superlative restaurants, boating, riding, mountain hiking — and a space age airport. This is Las Vegas, the one city that every American longs to visit at least once.

YOUR KEY TO PLEASURE

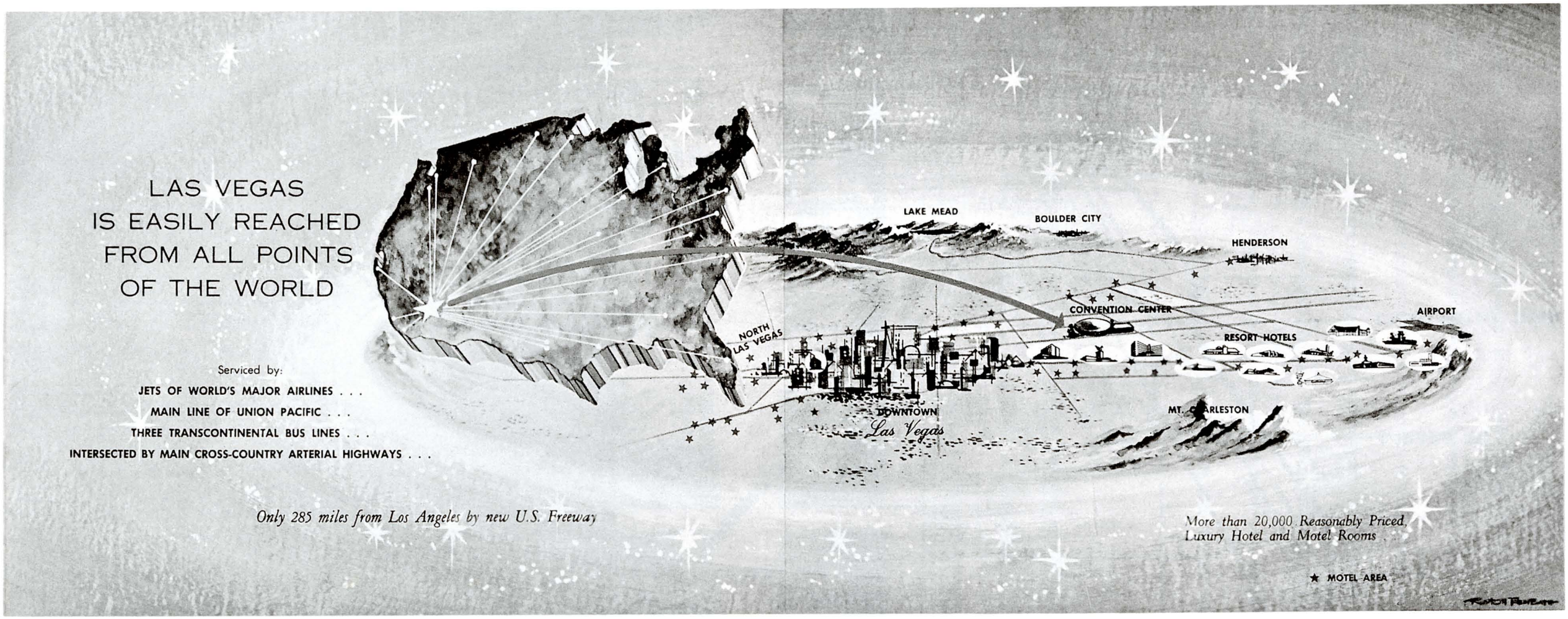
1. WARM SPRINGS — Unique desert oasis . . . swimming resorts, shaded picnic areas fed by flowing springs.
2. VALLEY OF FIRE — Famous natural phenomenon, where brilliant red rock form fantastic shapes. Picnic area, Indian relics.
3. HOOVER DAM — Mammoth engineering marvel of the century . . . guided tours and free movies of dam construction daily.
4. LAKE MEAD RECREATION AREA — World's largest man-made lake, a sportsmen's paradise . . . marina, fishing, swimming, boating, tours.
5. OVERTON AREA — Famous Pioneer area . . . lost city museum . . . wildlife, hunting and fishing.
6. CASHMAN FIELD — Home of famed western celebration, "Helldorado" . . . rodeos, parades, pioneer attire, Kangaroo Kort!
7. NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE — Country's largest air weapons training base, home of famed Thunderbirds, USAF aerial demonstration team.
8. LAS VEGAS CONVENTION CENTER— Futuristic 8 million dollar complex, hub of convention industry . . . seats 8,500, with 90,000 square feet of exhibit space. An architectural wonder. Guided tours.

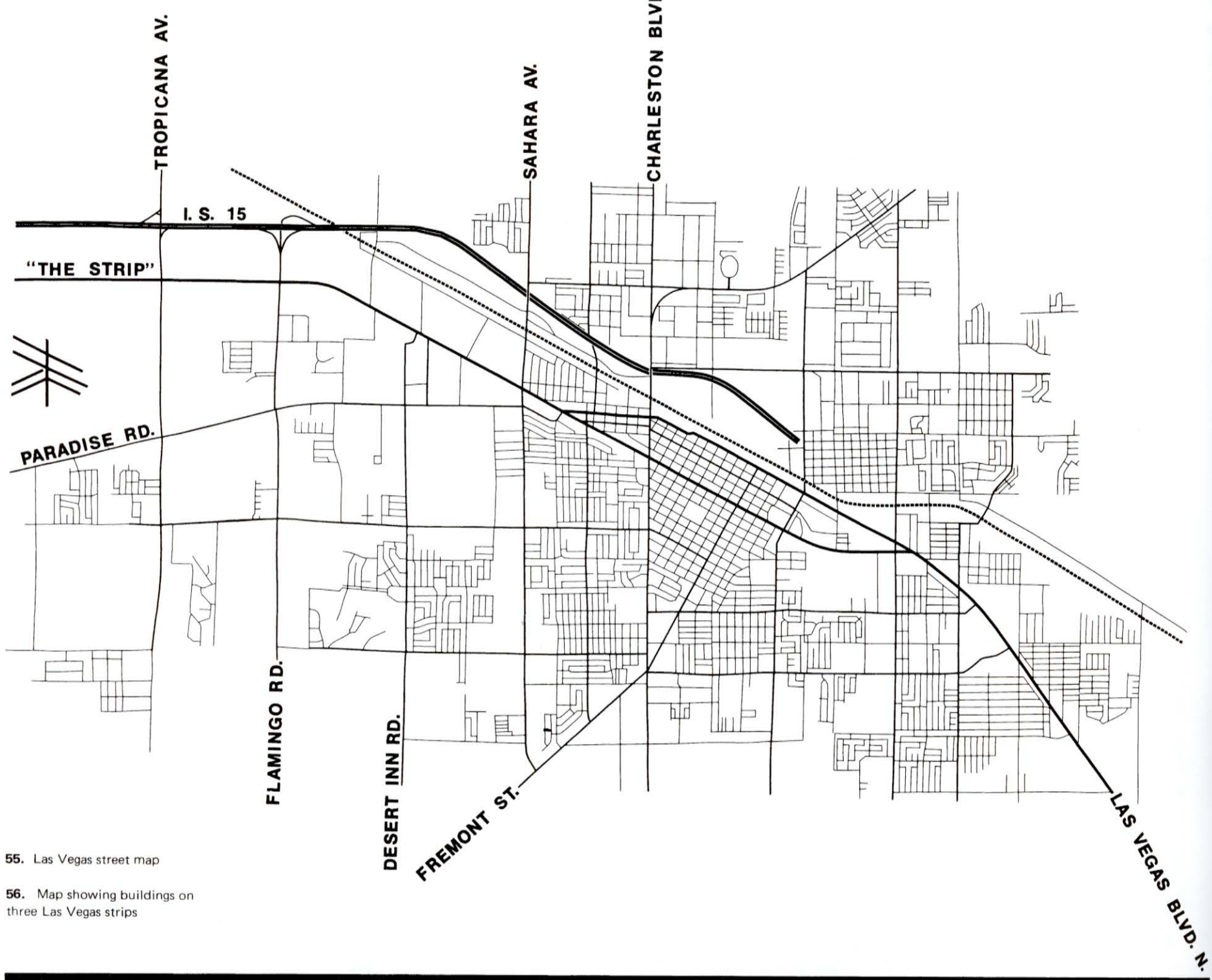


9. FAMOUS LAS VEGAS STRIP — Site of Las Vegas resort glamour . . . lavish casinos, famous-name entertainment, gourmet restaurants, fashionable shops.
10. CASINO CENTER — Gay White Way of the West! Downtown Las Vegas, dazzling casinos, complete shopping center, world's most brightly lit street.
11. GOLF COURSES — Ten 18-hole championship courses, making Las Vegas the all-year golf capital . . . site of major national tournaments.
12. McCARRAN FIELD AIR TERMINAL — Modern airport links Las Vegas with the world . . . seven major airlines, over 137 flights daily.
13. NEVADA TEST SITE — Massive outdoor laboratory of Atomic Energy Commission, 65 miles from Las Vegas. Space age research, nuclear weapons testing and development.
14. MT. CHARLESTON RECREATION AREA — A mountain vacationer's paradise, providing both winter sports, and a cool haven for picknickers and hikers in the summertime.
15. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE — 2301 East Sahara Avenue . . . tourist information center, maps, brochures.
16. RED ROCK — Thrilling natural scenery, minutes from Las Vegas . . riding trails, picnic areas, cool springs.
17. NEVADA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY — Regional sister to University of Nevada in Reno . . . beautiful campus . . . offering full 4-year curriculum.

53. Tourist map

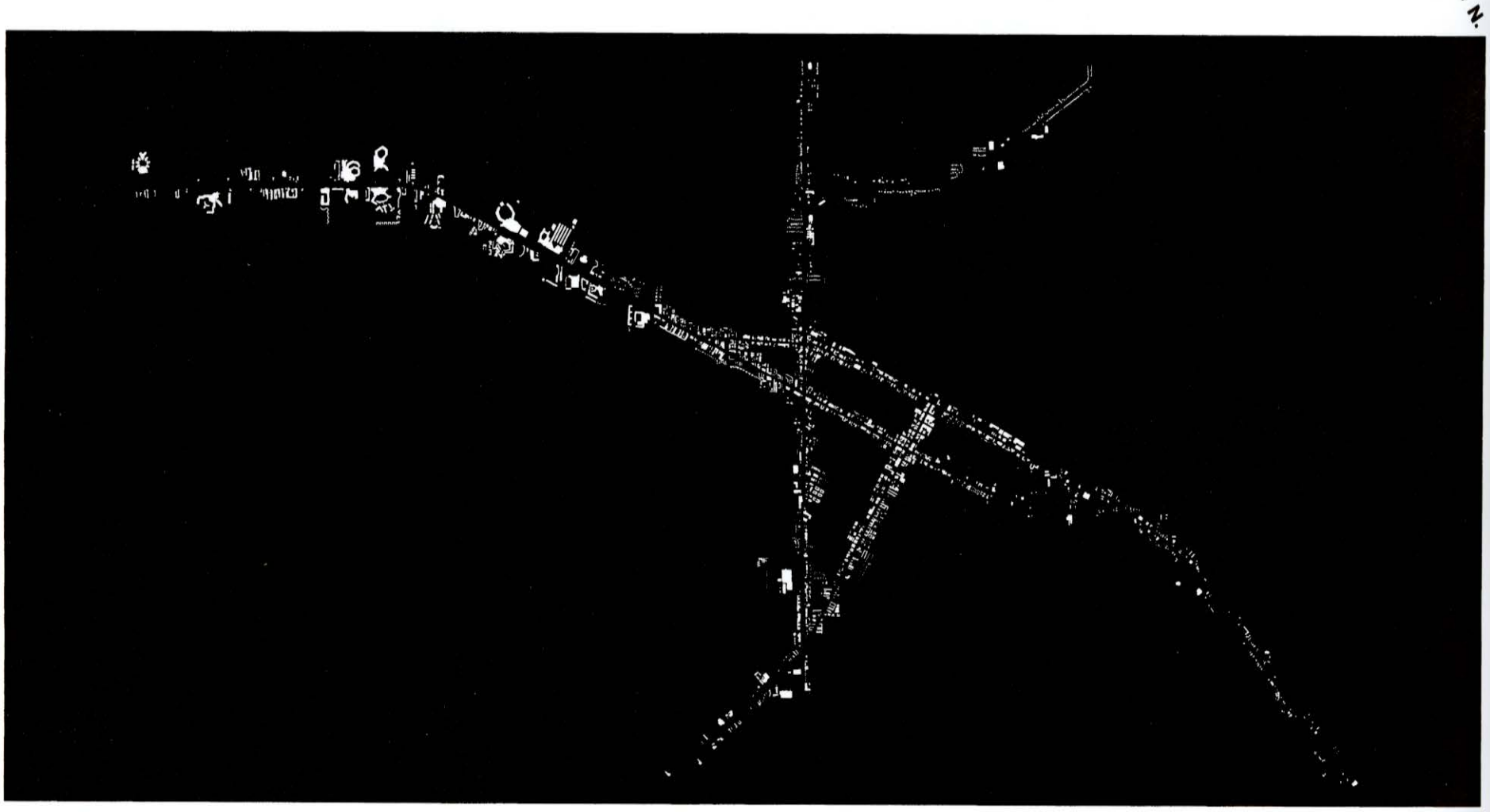
54. Tourist brochure





55. Las Vegas street map

56. Map showing buildings on three Las Vegas strips

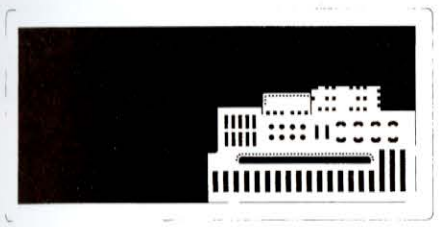


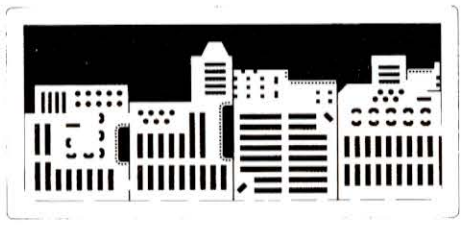
Main Street and the Strip

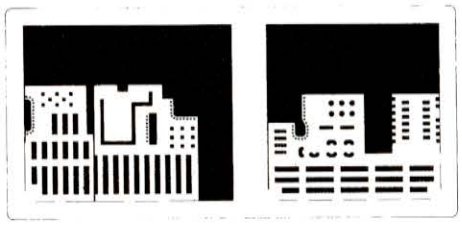
A street map of Las Vegas reveals two scales of movement within the gridiron plan: that of Main Street and that of the Strip.[55, 56] The main street of Las Vegas is Fremont Street, and the earlier of two concentrations of casinos is located along three of four blocks of this street. The casinos here are bazaarlike in the immediacy to the sidewalk of their[57-59] clicking and tinkling gambling machines. The Fremont Street casinos and hotels focus on the railroad depot at the head of the street; here the railroad and main street scales of movement connect. The depot building is now gone, replaced by a hotel, and the bus station is now the busier entrance to town, but the axial focus on the railroad depot from Fremont Street was visual, and possibly symbolic.[60-64] This contrasts with the Strip, where a second and later development of casinos extends southward to the airport, the jet-scale entrance to town.

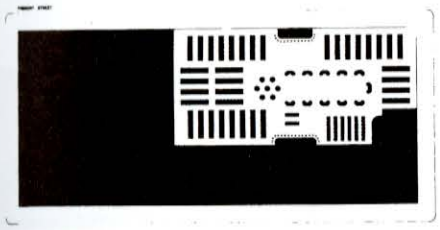
On Fremont Street the casinos are part of the sidewalk. On the Strip the public space goes right through the casinos and into the patios beyond, where the relation between public open space and private suites is mediated by a set of sensitive devices. Even the parking lots, which in other cities have about the same public significance as the bathroom corridor (that is, they are public, but you would rather not notice them), are here ritualized and given a ceremonial function. The relation between public space, public-private space, and private space is as intricate and intriguing as that of the Rome of the Counter-Reformation.

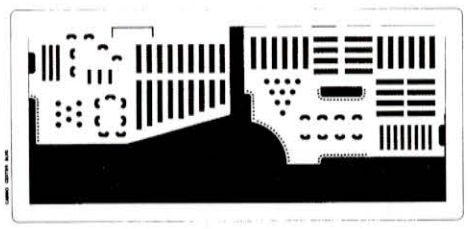
One's first introduction to Las Vegas architecture is a forebear of Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal, which is the local airport building. Beyond this piece of architectural image, impressions are scaled to the car rented at the airport. Here is the unraveling of the famous Strip itself,[65] which, as Route 91, connects the airport with the downtown.

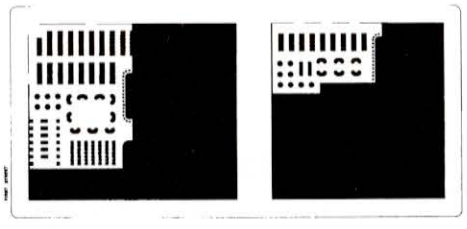






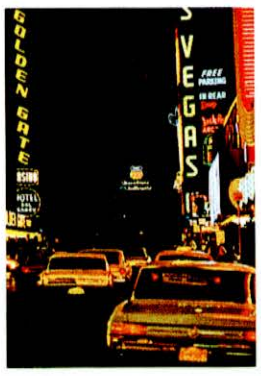


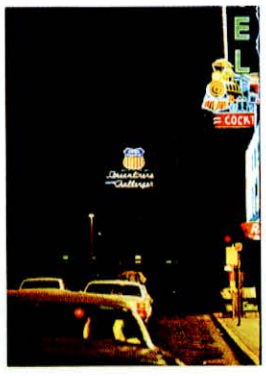




57. Nolli's Map of Fremont Street, downtown Las Vegas. Gambling machines are the poché because they, not the columns, define the casino.

58, 59. Fremont Street casino entrance

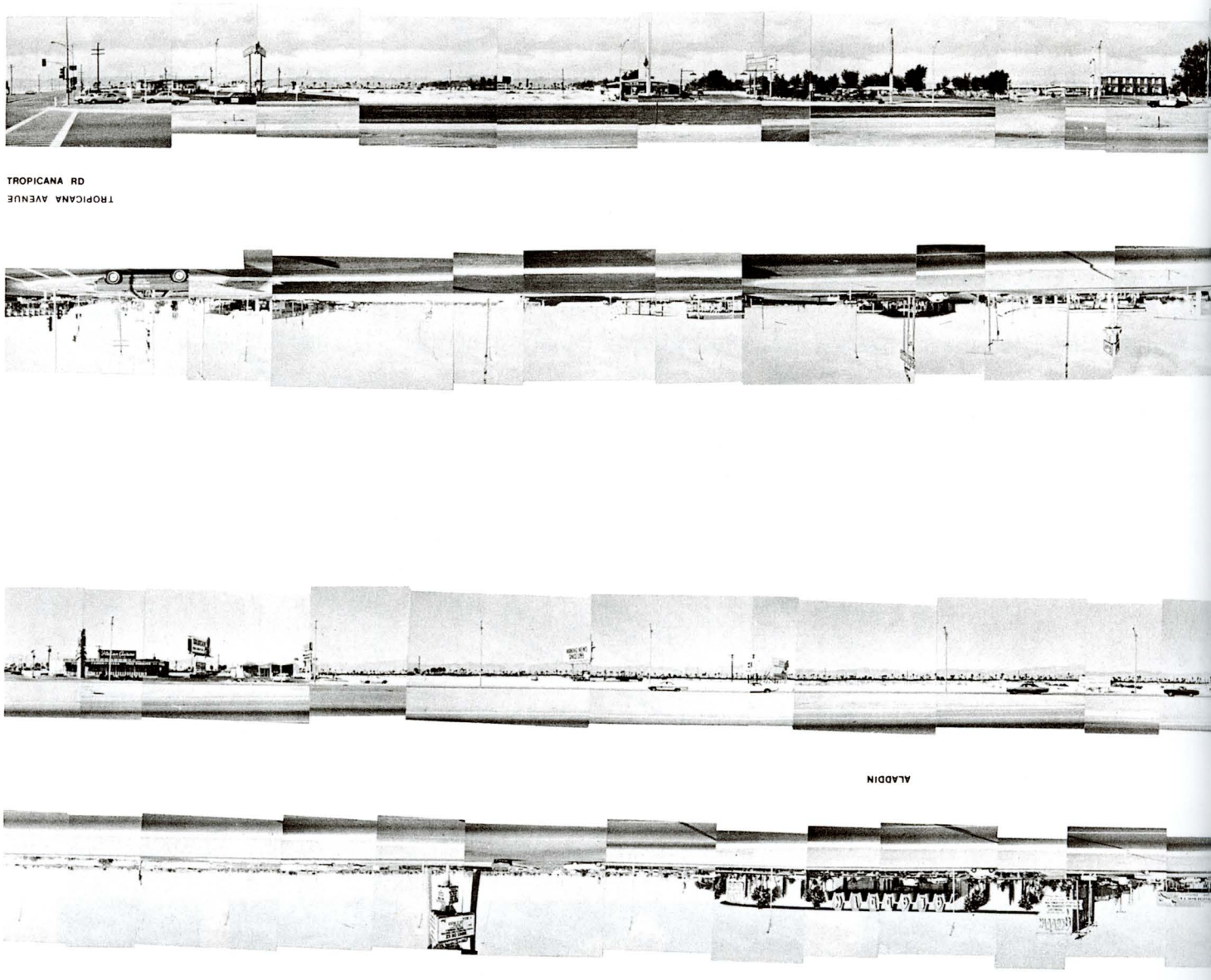


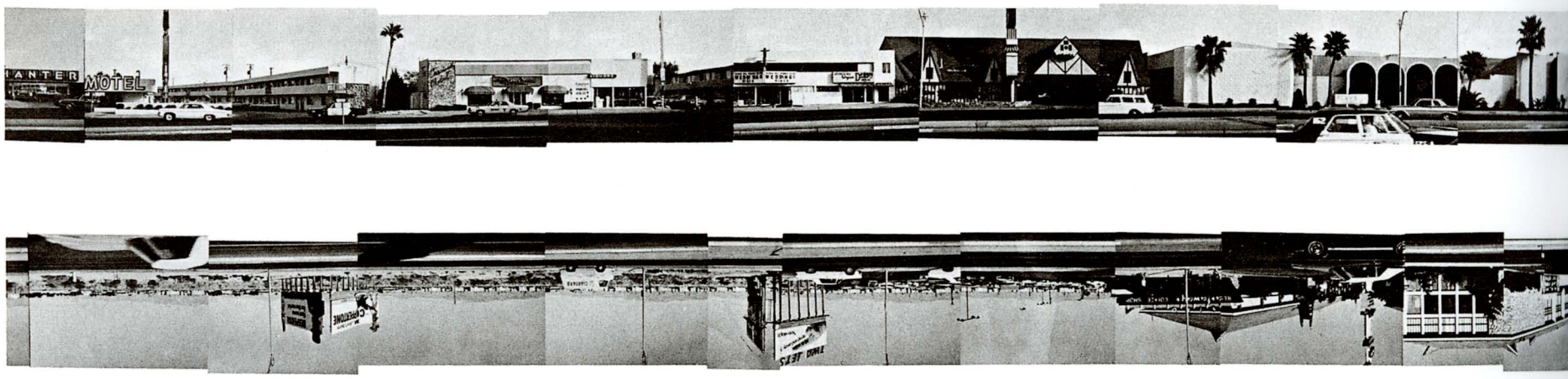


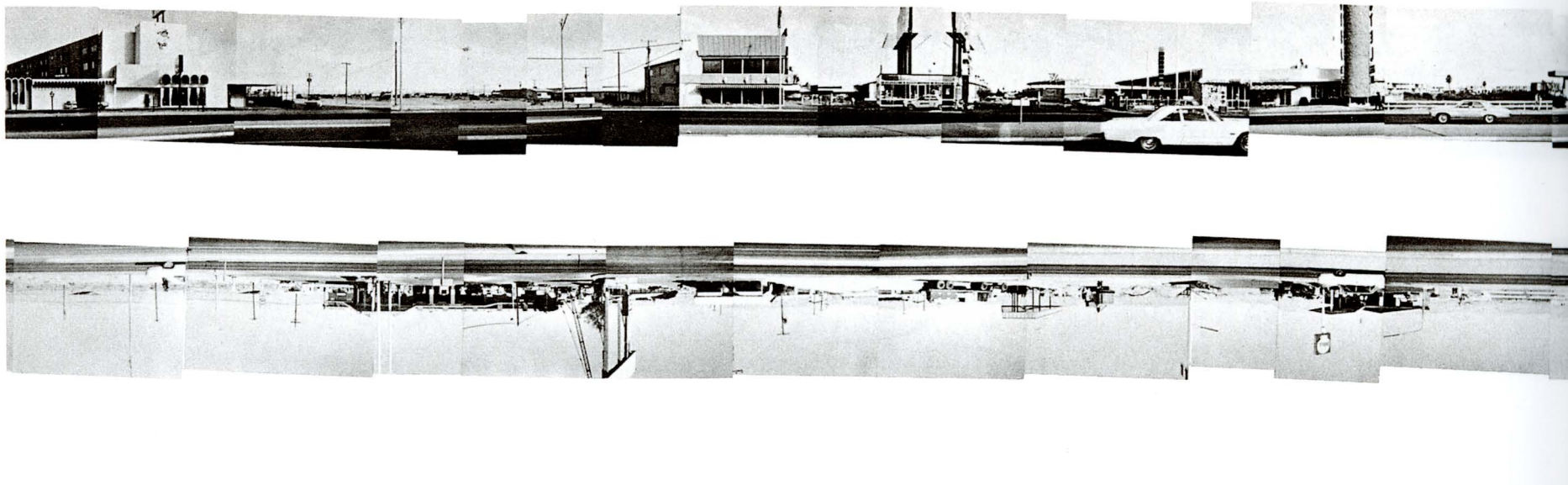
60-63. Fremont Street sequence moving west to Union Pacific Station

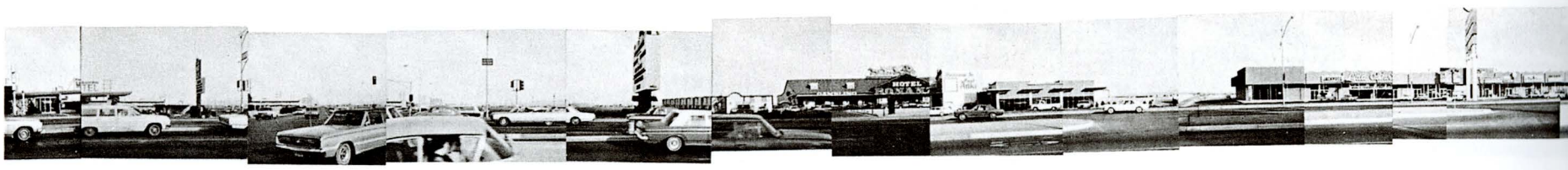
64. Union Pacific Station (now demolished)

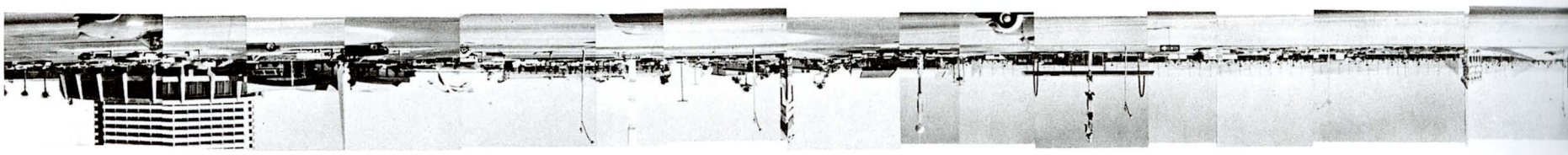
65. An "Edward Ruscha" elevation of the Strip. Tourist maps are made of the Grand Canal and the Rhine showing the route lined by its palaces. Ruscha made one of the Sunset Strip. We imitated his for the Las Vegas Strip.

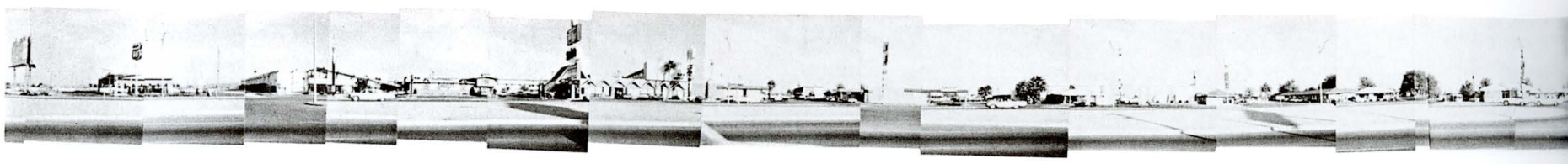


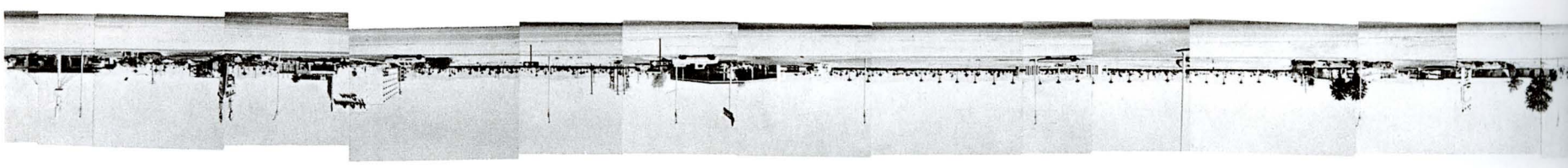

MOTEL

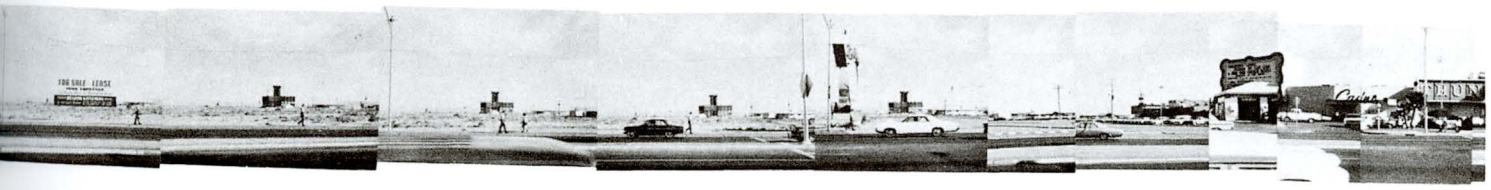


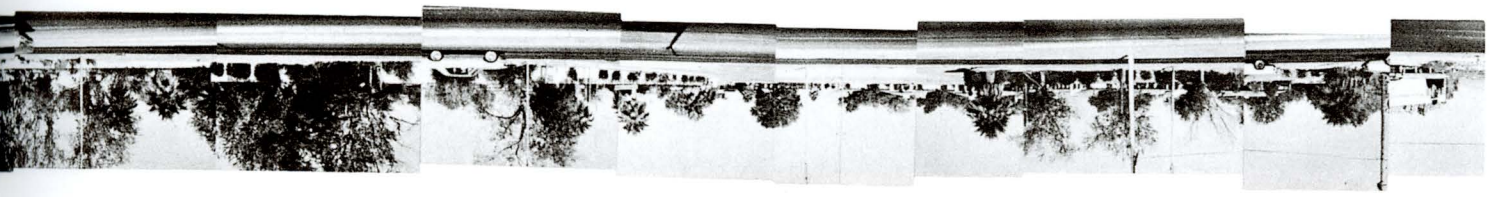

FLAMINGO ROAD
DUNES

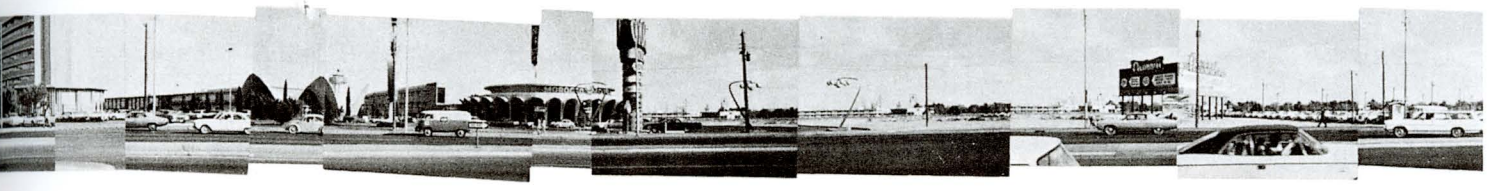




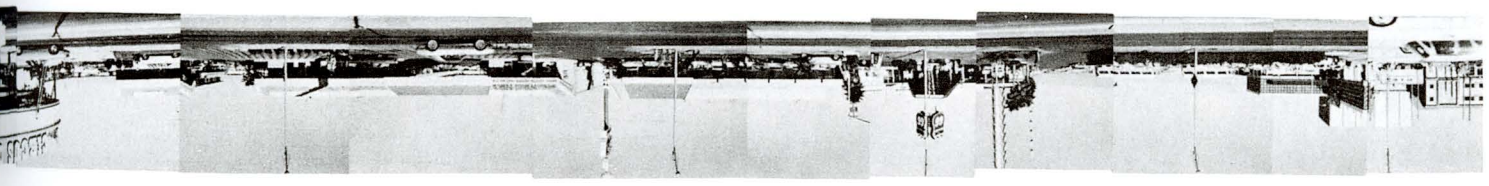


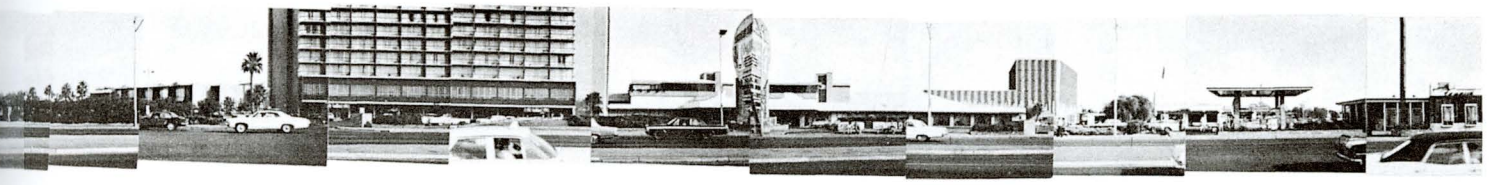






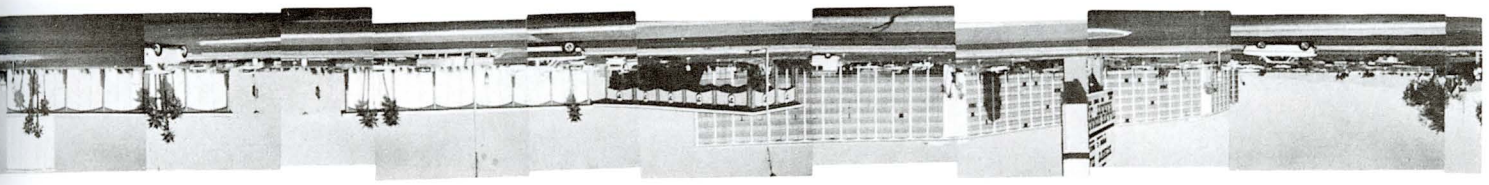
STRIP WEST SIDE

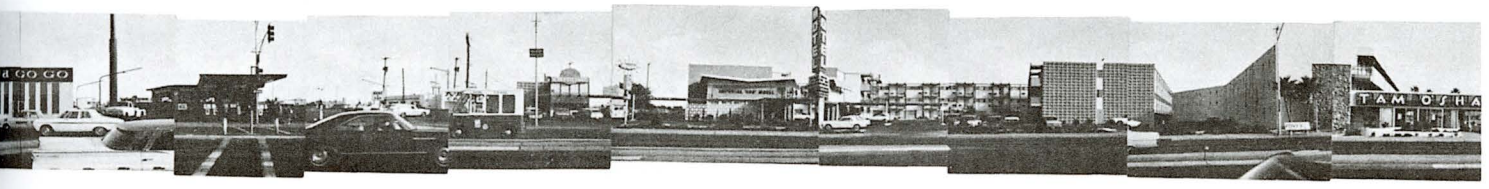


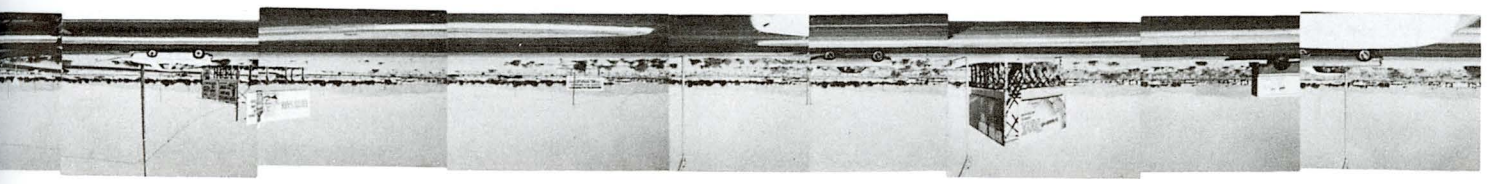


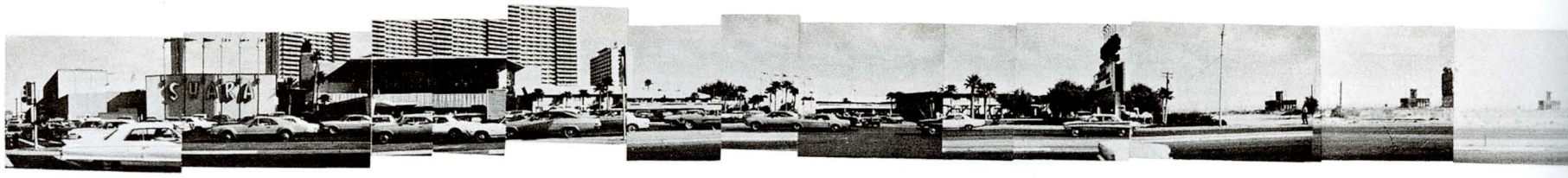
DESERT INN

FRONTIER



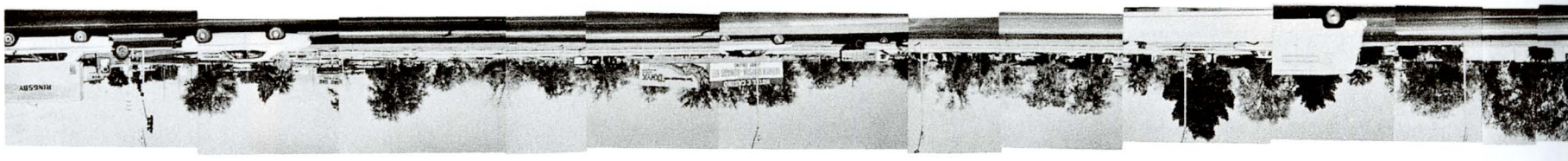






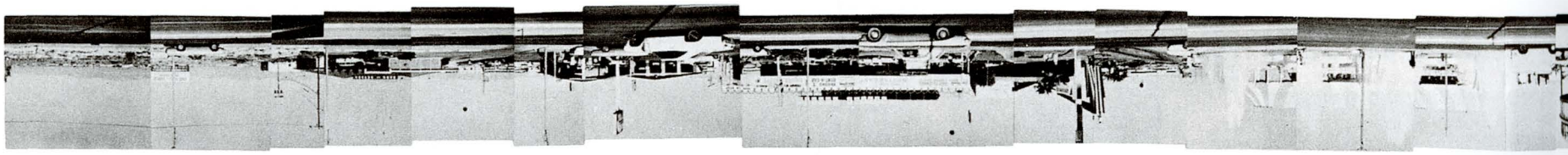
STRIP EAST SIDE

SAHARA



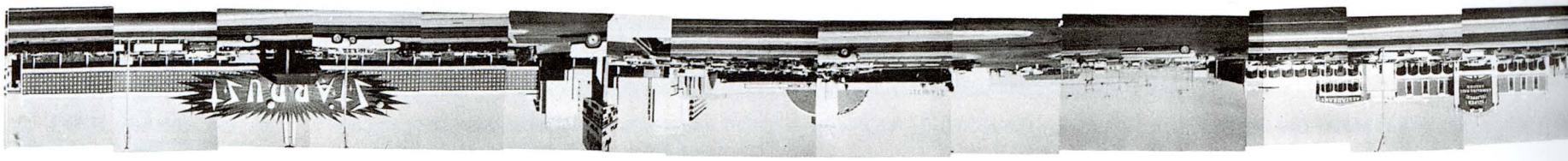
THUNDERBIRD

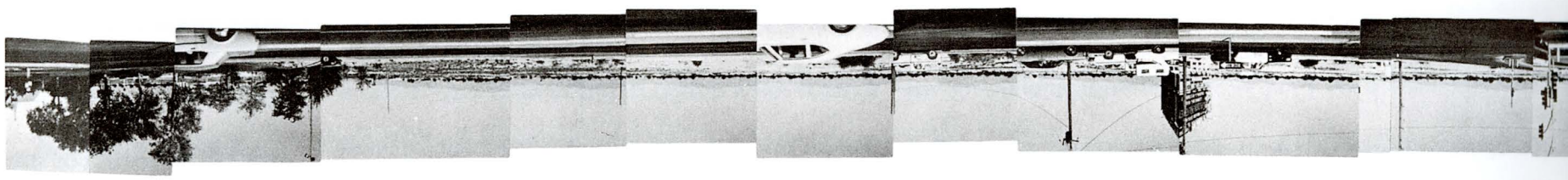
CIRCUS CIRCUS



CONVENTION CENTER DRIVE

STARDUST



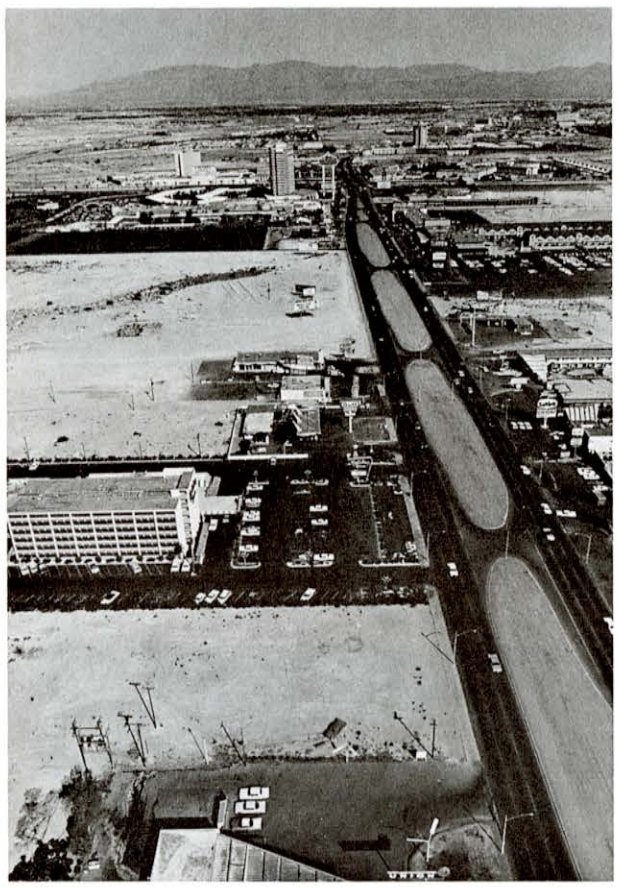


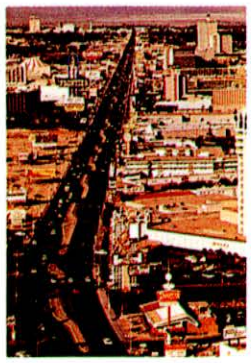
ING MOUNTAIN ROAD

System and Order on the Strip

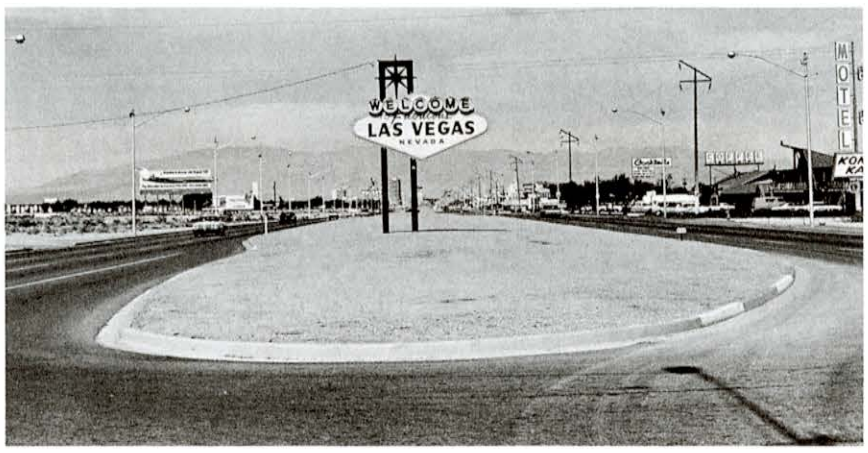
The image of the commercial strip is chaos. The order in this landscape is not obvious. The continuous highway itself and its systems for turning are absolutely consistent. **66, 67** The median strip accommodates the U-turns necessary to a vehicular promenade for casino crawlers as well as left turns onto the local street pattern that the Strip intersects. **68, 69** The curbing allows frequent right turns for casinos and other commercial enterprises and eases the difficult transitions from highway to parking. The streetlights function superfluously along many parts of the Strip that are incidentally but abundantly lit by signs, **70** but their consistency of form and position and their arching shapes begin to identify by day a continuous space of the highway, **71-73** and the constant rhythm contrasts effectively with the uneven rhythms of the signs behind.

66, 67. Median strips. Upper Strip looking north to downtown Las Vegas





68, 69. U-turn median strip. Upper Strip looking north



70. Upper Strip looking north. The street lights are the dotted edge of the road.

71-73. Street lights, upper Strip

This counterpoint reinforces the contrast between two types of order on the Strip: the obvious visual order of street elements and the difficult visual order of buildings and signs. The zone of the highway is a shared order. The zone off the highway is an individual order. **74, 75** The elements of the highway are civic. The buildings and signs are private. In combination **76** they embrace continuity and discontinuity, going and stopping, clarity and ambiguity, cooperation and competition, the community and rugged individualism. The system of the highway gives order to the sensitive functions of exit and entrance, as well as to the image of the Strip as a sequential whole. **77-82** It also generates places for individual enterprises to grow and controls the general direction of that growth. It allows variety and change along its sides and accommodates the contrapuntal, competitive order of the individual enterprises.

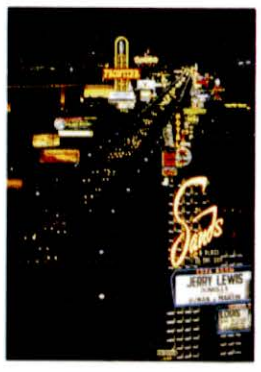
There is an order along the sides of the highway. Varieties of activities are juxtaposed on the Strip: service stations, minor motels, and multimillion-dollar casinos. Marriage chapels ("credit cards accepted") converted from bungalows with added neon-lined steeples are apt to appear anywhere toward the downtown end. Immediate proximity of related uses, as on main street where you walk from one store to another, is not required along the Strip because interaction is by car and highway. You drive from one casino to another even when they are adjacent because of the distance between them, and an intervening service station is not disagreeable.

"TWIN PHENOMENA"

Aldo van Eyck has defined what others might call polar opposites — inside and outside, public and private, unique and general — as "twin phenomena," because these pairs are inextricably intertwined at every level in the city.

Differences between the blazing outside and the cool, dark inside are poignantly strong in Las Vegas; yet they are countercrossed by the domesticated "outside" inside the patio and by the night-sky lighting of the casino lounges. Day is negated inside the casinos, and night is negated on the Strip. The signs are, contradictorily, for day and night.

The casinos flaunt their uniqueness yet are backed by generalized systematized motel space behind. They are set off by the gasoline stations that use their standard, national designs but make their signs uniquely high. The street lighting and road signs are rigidly systematic in contrast with the signs of persuasion that shout their gorgeous cacophony but hide their constraining order. Some Strip establishments, such as casinos and wedding chapels, are generators, and others, such as motels and gasoline stations, benefit from the market generated.

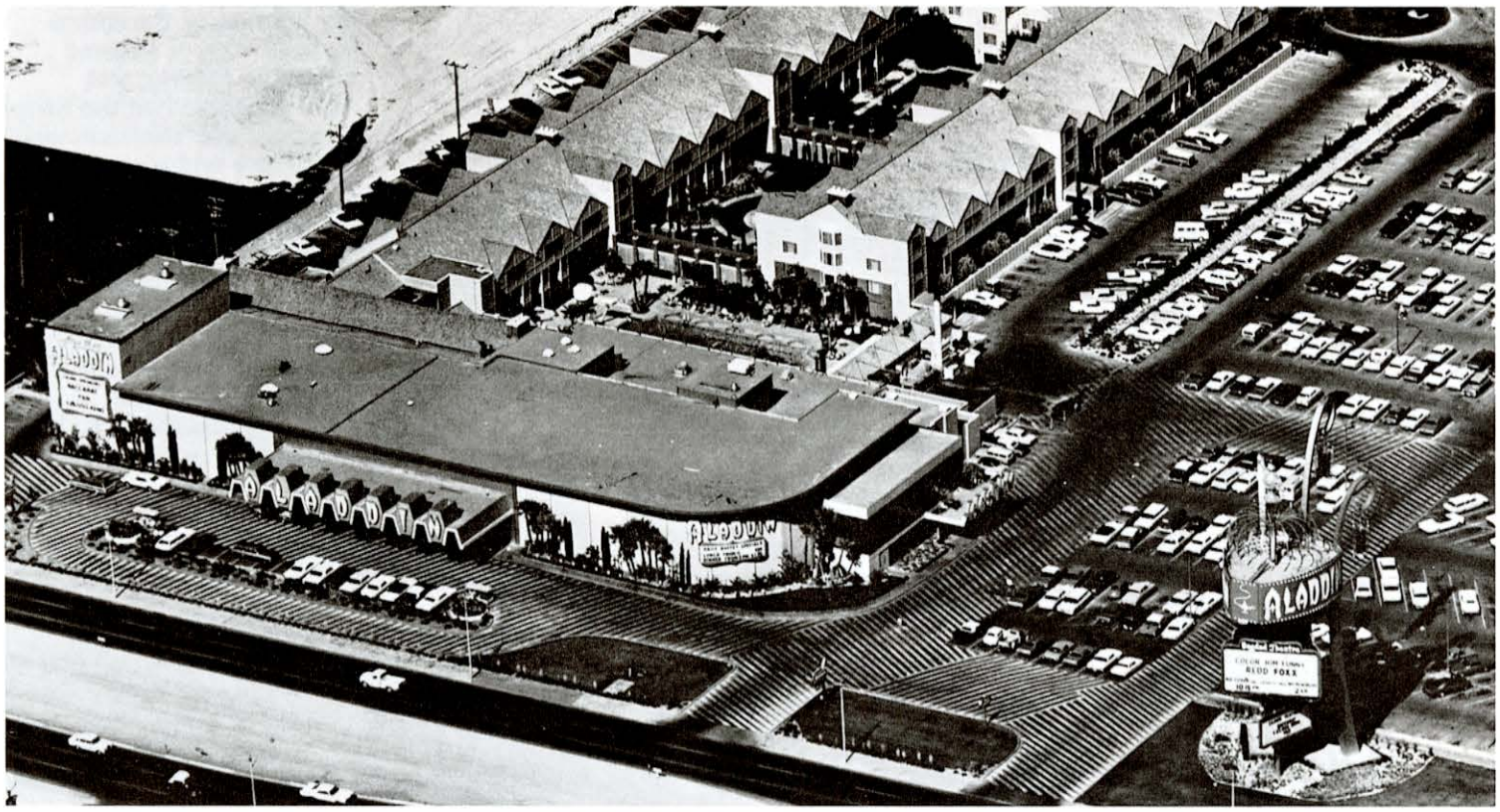


74, 75. Upper Strip looking north

76-82. Sequence, lower Strip, driving north

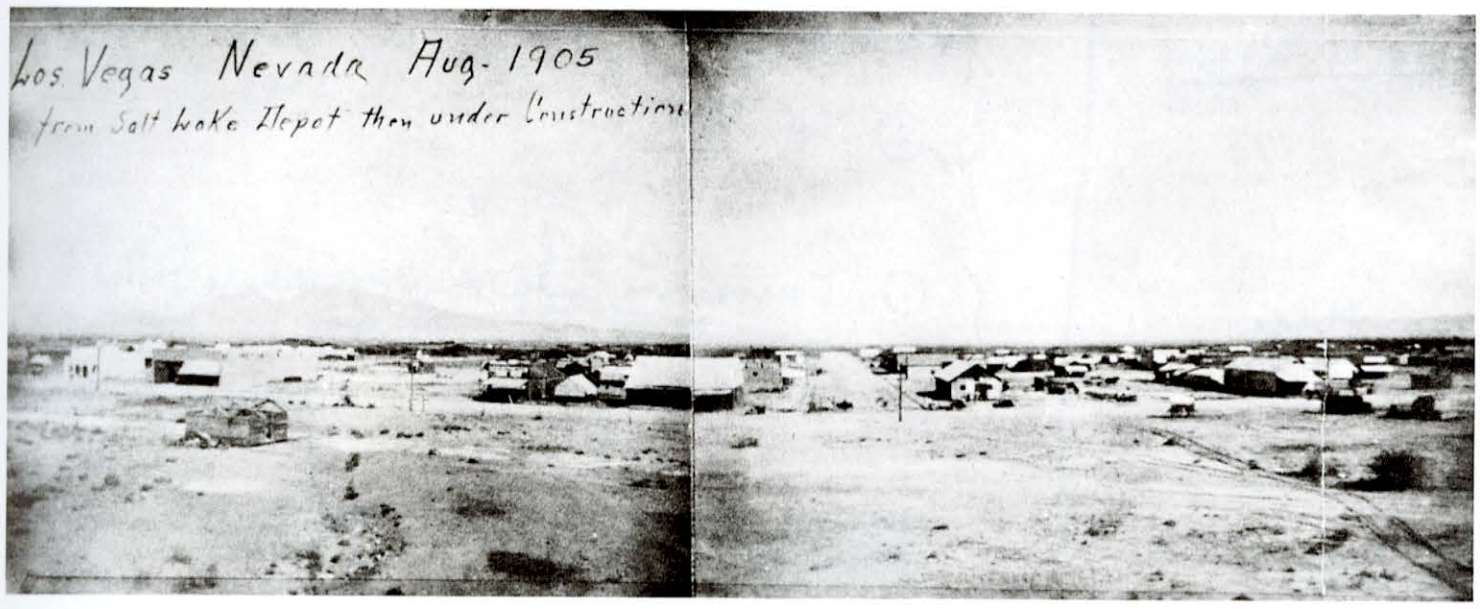
Change and Permanence on the Strip

The rate of obsolescence of a sign seems to be nearer to that of an automobile than that of a building. The reason is not physical degeneration but what competitors are doing around you. The leasing system operated by the sign companies and the possibility of total tax write-off may have something to do with it. The most unique, most monumental parts of the Strip, the signs and casino facades, are also the most changeable; it is the neutral, systems-motel structures behind that survive a succession of facelifts and a series of themes up front. The Aladdin Hotel and Casino is Moorish in front and Tudor behind. **83, 84**



83, 84. Aladdin Casino and Hotel

Las Vegas's greatest growth has been since World War II. There are noticeable changes every year: new hotels and signs as well as neon-embossed parking structures replacing on-lot parking on and behind Fremont Street. Like the agglomeration of chapels in a Roman church and the stylistic sequence of piers in a Gothic cathedral, the Golden Nugget casino has evolved over 30 years from a building with a sign on it to a totally sign-covered building. The Stardust Hotel has engulfed a small restaurant and a second hotel in its expansion and has united the three-piece facade with 600 feet of computer-programmed animated neon.



85. Las Vegas, August, 1905

86. Las Vegas, Fremont Street, 1910

87. Las Vegas, Fremont Street, 1940s

88. Las Vegas, Fremont Street, 1960s

TYPES OF CHANGE

(A) Layerings of Facades & Plans
to expand spatially & stylistically

① Stardust Hotel facade (by decades)

② Gothic Cathedrals (by generations)

(B) Competitive Increases in Signs and Symbols

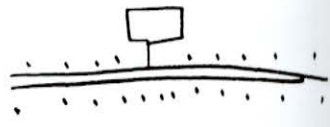
① Las Vegas Signs

② San Gimignano Towers

(C) The Strip becomes a Place

① Convention Center & International Hotel

② the Shopping Center



① the Golden Nugget

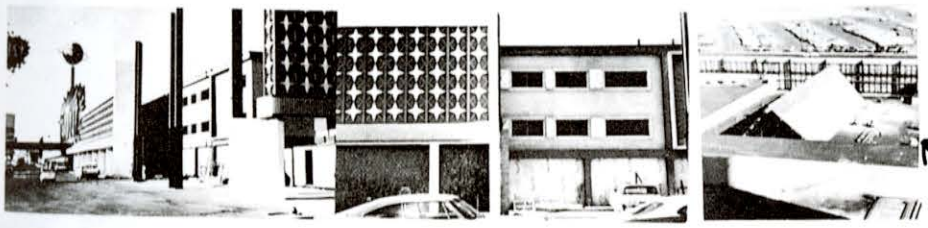
(D) Building becomes Sign

(E) the Evolution of Parking on "Main Street"

① the Golden Nugget on Fremont

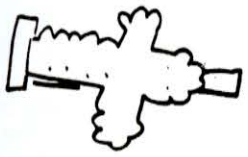
Change and Permanence

Before

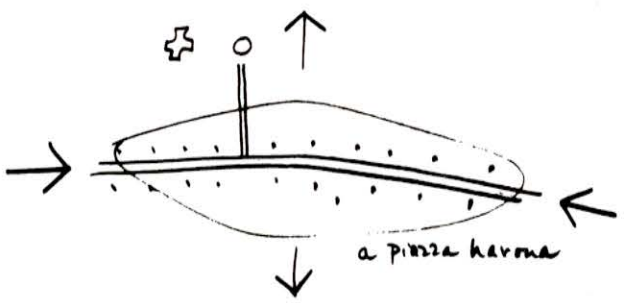


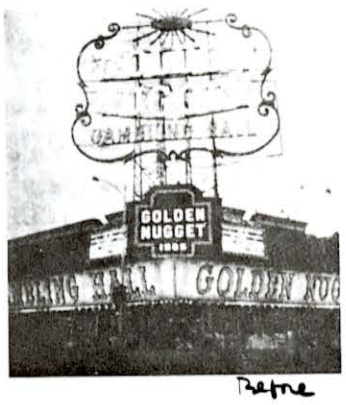
After

Kon Tiki Room



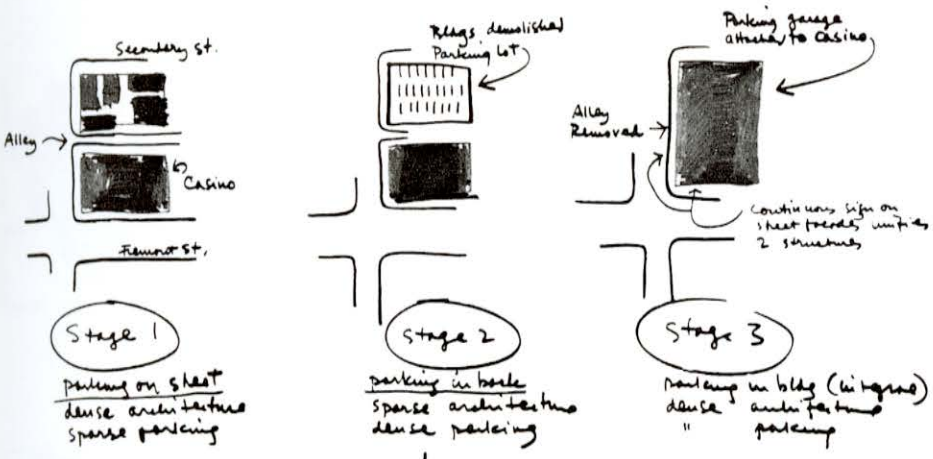
etc - Canterbury : add onto
Gloucester : cut into Romanesque





Before

After



new
LOOK FITS THE STARDUST image
The world's largest resort hotel will soon have a new look to match its reputation for fun and fast action. Continuous varied animated light patterns conveying sensations such as speed, surprise, and even humor will flash across a new front nearly a quarter mile long. The new look will completely change the appearance of the current conventional hotel exterior. Extensive remodeling and additional construction plans
Miller and Associates, Architects and Engineers, were retained by the Stardust as consultants on the facade and building modifications which include a new main lobby now almost completed; a new north casino entrance, and additional administrative space. Interior design is by Paul László, I.D.S.A., who is currently redesigning much of the Stardust public space. The programming equipment controlling the lights which will flash across the front of the hotel is the most sophisticated to be used in electric displays. It will determine
STARDUST
were recently
the patterns to be

The Architecture of the Strip

It is hard to think of each flamboyant casino as anything but unique, and this is as it should be, because good advertising technique requires the differentiation of the product. However, these casinos have much in common because they are under the same sun, on the same Strip, and perform similar functions; they differ from other casinos – say, on Fremont Street – and from other hotels that are not casinos. **90, 91**

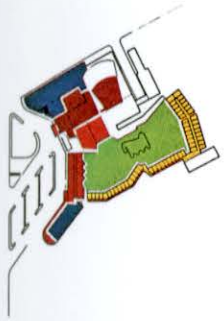
A typical hotel-casino complex contains a building that is near enough to the highway to be seen from the road across the parked cars, yet far enough back to accommodate driveways, turnarounds, and parking. The parking in front is a token: It reassures the customer but does not obscure the building. It is prestige parking: The customer pays. The bulk of the parking, along the sides of the complex, allows direct access to the hotel yet stays visible from the highway. Parking is seldom at the back. The scales of movement and space of the highway relate to the distances between buildings; because they are far apart, they can be comprehended at high speeds. Front footage on the Strip has not yet reached the value it once had on main street, and parking is still an appropriate filler. Big space between buildings is characteristic of the Strip. It is significant that Fremont Street is more photogenic than the Strip. **92, 93** A single postcard can carry a view of the Golden Horseshoe, The Mint Hotel, the Golden Nugget, and the Lucky Casino. A single shot of the Strip is less spectacular; its enormous spaces must be seen as moving sequences. **94**

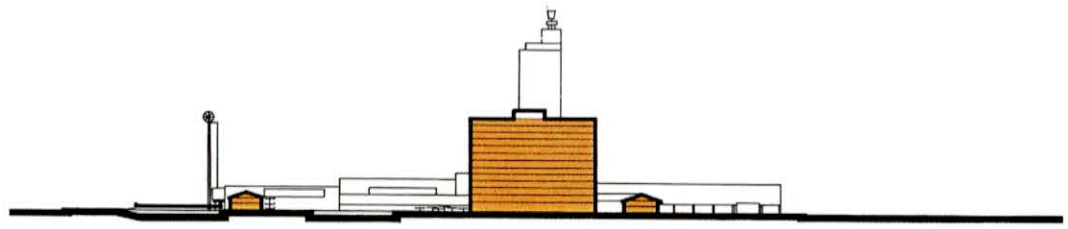
COMPILING A PATTERN BOOK

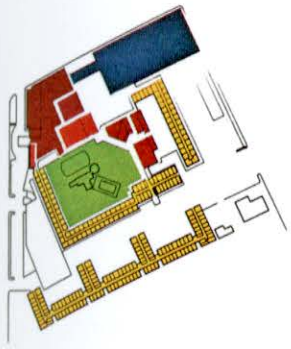
To find the system behind the flamboyance, we devised schedules of individual building parts – floors, walls, gas pumps, parking lots, plans, elevation (front, back, and side) – for different building types and for portions of the street. These parts can then be reassembled as a two-dimensional graph for each building type with buildings on the X axis and parts of buildings on the Y axis. Reading across the graph, we have one building; reading down, all elevations of that building type on the Strip; and on the diagonal, a prototypical building.

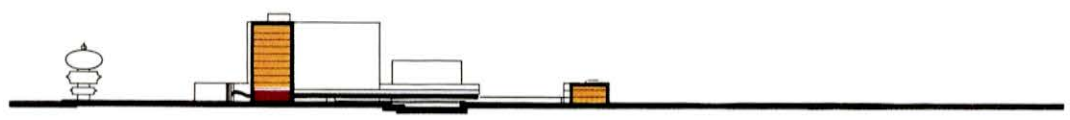
The side elevation of the complex is important, because it is seen by approaching traffic from a greater distance and for a longer time than the facade. The rhythmic gables on the long, low, English medieval style, half-timbered motel sides of the Aladdin read emphatically across the parking space and through the signs and the giant statue of the neighboring Texaco station, and contrast with the modern Near Eastern flavor of the casino front. **95, 96** Casino fronts on the Strip often inflect in shape and ornament toward the right, to welcome right-lane traffic. Modern styles use a porte cochere that is diagonal in plan. Brazilianoid International styles use free forms.

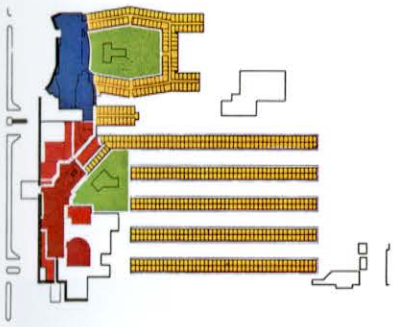
90, 91. A schedule of Las Vegas Strip hotels: plans and sections and elements (see next page)

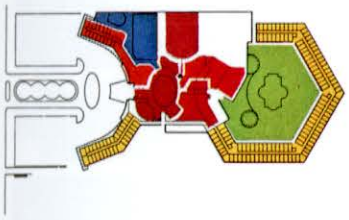


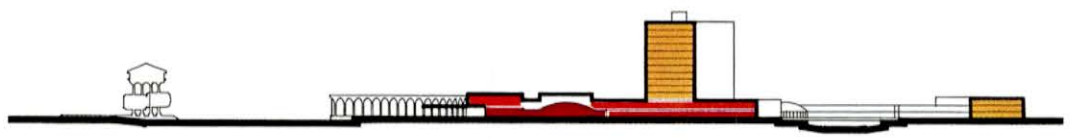


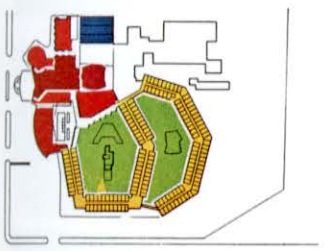


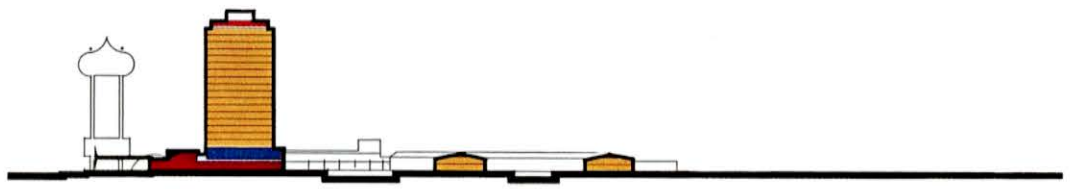


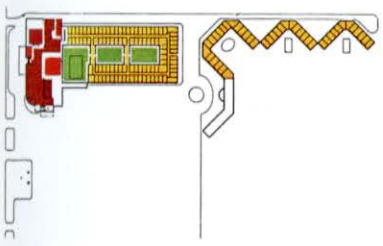


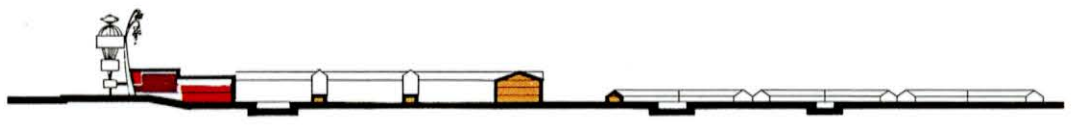


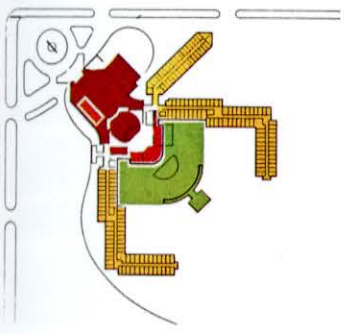


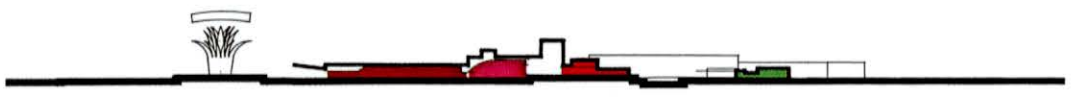












90, 91. A schedule of Las Vegas Strip hotels: plans and sections and elements

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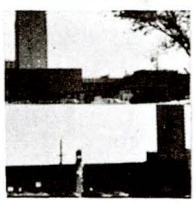
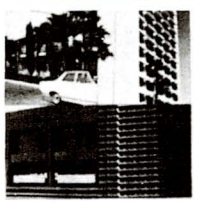
Sahara								
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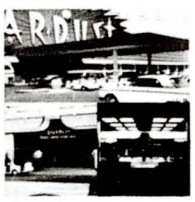
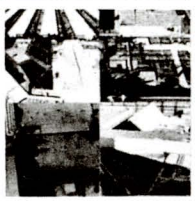
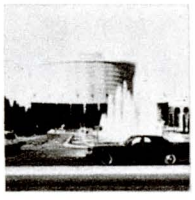
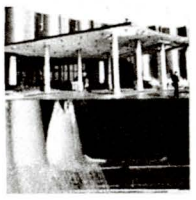
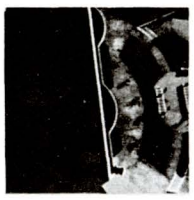
Stardust								
Caesars Palace								
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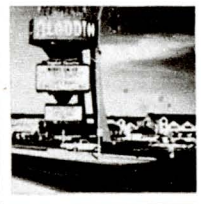
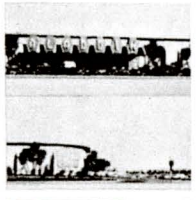
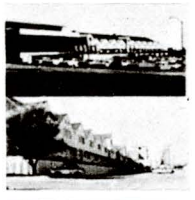
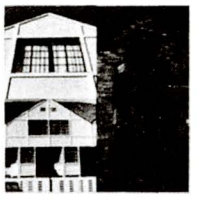
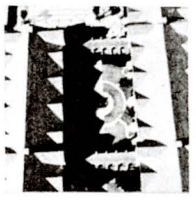
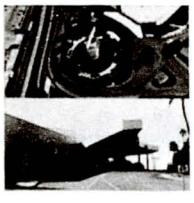
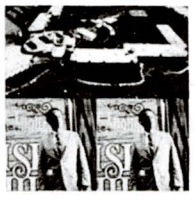
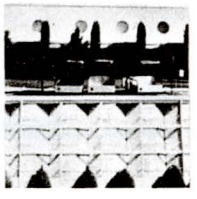
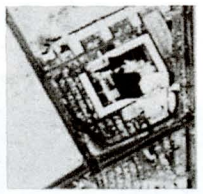
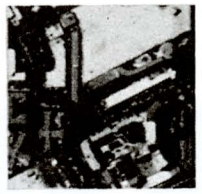
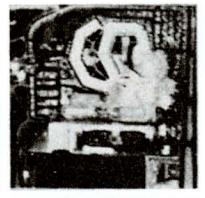
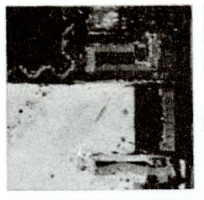
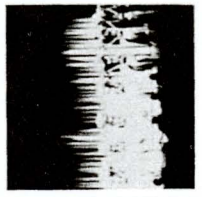
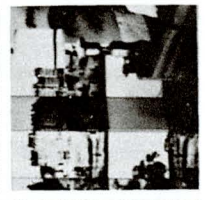
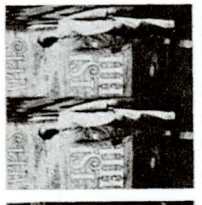
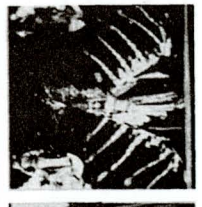
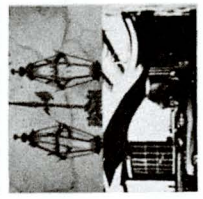
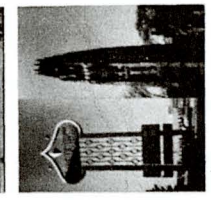
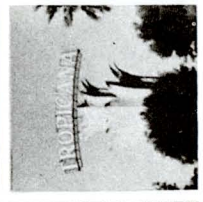
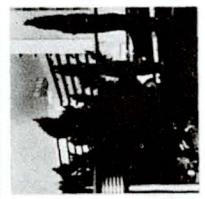
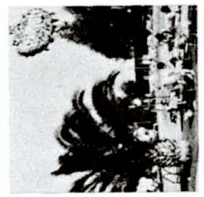
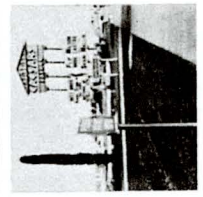
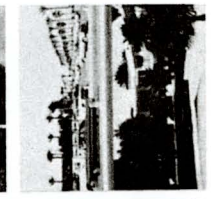
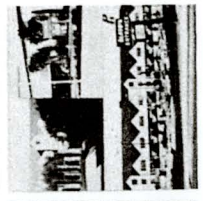
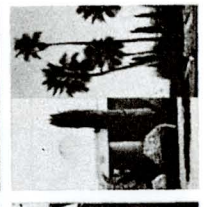
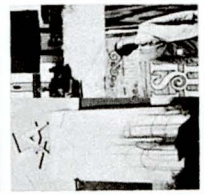
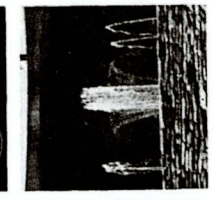
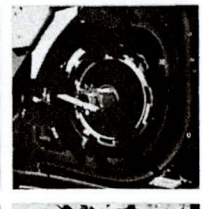
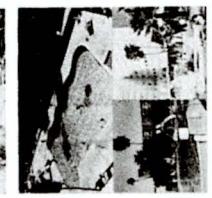
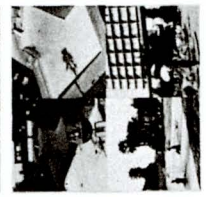
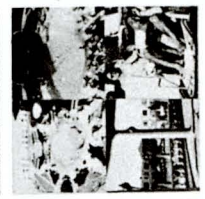
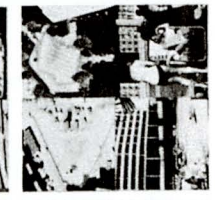
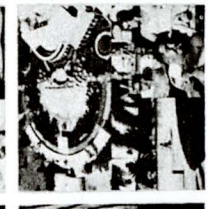
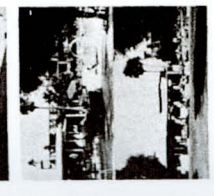
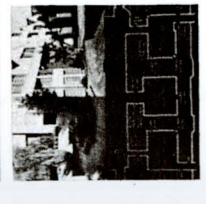
Aladdin								
Tropicana								

Style	Miami Moroccan	International Jet Set Style	Arte Moderne Hollywood Orgasmic Organic Behind	Yamasaki Bernini cum Roman Orgiastic	Niemeyer Moorish	Moorish Tudor (Arabian Knights)	Bauhaus Hawaiian
Aerial							
Interior							
Sculpture							
Sign							
Foliage							
Fountain							
Oasis							
Pedestrian							

92, 93. Fremont Street Casinos

94. Movie sequence traveling north on the Strip from Tropicana Avenue to Sahara Avenue

95, 96. Aladdin Casino and Hotel

Service stations, motels, and other simpler types of buildings conform in general to this system of inflection toward the highway through the position and form of their elements. Regardless of the front, the back of the building is styleless, because the whole is turned toward the front and no one sees the back.[97] The gasoline stations parade their universality. The aim is to demonstrate their similarity to the one at home — your friendly gasoline station. But here they are not the brightest thing in town.[98] This galvanizes them. A motel is a motel anywhere. But here the imagery is heated up by the need to compete in the surroundings. The artistic influence has spread, and Las Vegas motels have signs like no others Their ardor lies somewhere between the casinos and the wedding chapels. Wedding chapels, like many urban land uses, are not form-specific.[99] They tend to be one of a succession of uses a more generalized building type (a bungalow or a store front) may have. But a wedding-chapel style or image is maintained in different types through the use of symbolic ornament in neon, and the activity adapts itself to different inherited plans. As for street furniture, the Strip has it like other cities, yet it is hardly in evidence.[100]

Beyond the town, the only transition between the Strip and the Mojave Desert is a zone of rusting beer cans.[101] Within the town, the transition is as ruthlessly sudden. Casinos whose fronts relate so sensitively to the highway turn their ill-kempt backsides toward the local environment, exposing the residual forms and spaces of mechanical equipment and service areas.

For the average citizen there are some simple tests which will tell him when we have passed from incantation to practical action on the environment. Restriction of auto use in the large cities will be one. Another will be when the billboards, the worst and most nearly useless excrescence of industrial civilization, are removed from the highways....My own personal test, for what it may be worth, concerns the gasoline service station. This is the most repellent piece of architecture of the past two thousand years. There are far more of them than are needed. Usually they are filthy. Their merchandise is hideously packaged and garishly displayed. They are uncontrollably addicted to great strings of ragged little flags. Protecting them is an ominous coalition of

97. A schedule of Las Vegas Strip gas stations

small businessmen and large. The stations should be excluded entirely from most streets and highways. Where allowed, they should be franchised to limit the number, and there should be stern requirements as to architecture, appearance, and general reticence. When we begin on this (and similar roadside commerce), I will think that we are serious.[4]

4. John Kenneth Galbraith, "To My New Friends in the Affluent Society — Greetings," Life (March 27, 1970), p. 20.

98. A schedule of Las Vegas Strip motels

99. A schedule of Las Vegas Strip wedding chapels

100. A schedule of Las Vegas Strip street furniture

Gasoline Stations

The client: The real estate department of the oil company. Handles site acquisition, construction and coordination, financing, and so forth.

The site: Determined by the traffic count, cost of land, and competition. Frontage generally determines cost — average 150 feet.

The building: Two or three service bays, facing the front; the office; storage space; customer services — "travel center," vending machines, rest rooms, and so forth.

The styling: Pressures from the beautification people and local zoning boards; Mobil's "modern" box, Shell's "ranch house," and the universal "Colonial" (it's just like your suburban house, except it has pumps in front); use of residential materials — wood, brick, stone; a trend toward standardized form where the building becomes a sign.

The service area: Pumps and oil displays; canopy provides protection from the sun and bad weather and acts as a sign (Mobil's circle or Phillips' soaring V). Must be fully visible from the service bays in the station, because most stations are one- or two-man operations. There must be plenty of room to maneuver in order to prevent collisions with the pumps and equipment.

The signs: Three orders of magnitude: one sign for great distances (freeway scale); one sign for approach distances (feeder road); the building or sign canopy for close-up.

The lighting: Says station is open; lighting crucial at entrance, exit, and pumps. Oil companies want the source of light visible for maximum impact, resist indirect lighting; big problems with bugs and with zoning boards.

Motels

The site: Determined by traffic count, access to freeways, frontage costs, easy visibility; office and restaurant nearest road; meeting rooms (to draw the businessman); bedrooms away from road, adjacent to parking and grouped about a pool, patio, and so forth.

The buildings: Office and canopy with temporary parking; restaurant with parking; convention facilities; bedrooms near parking and connected by covered walkways to other facilities; the standard room size is 14 feet wide by 27, 24, or 21 feet long. Enter off a double-loaded corridor, luggage rack, closet and shelf space on one side; dressing room with sink and bathroom on other; then bed-sitting room; large sliding glass window to patio, balcony, pool; TV opposite the bed; luggage rack, desk, and TV counter in one continuous counter top; generally one or two double beds with assorted remote controls in the headboard.

The styling: Inside, it avoids the all-bedroom look (just like home but a bit more luxurious); outside, the basic components are standardized so that the building becomes the sign, like the Howard Johnson and the Holiday Inn. (Peter Hoyt)

101. The Strip from the desert

The Interior Oasis

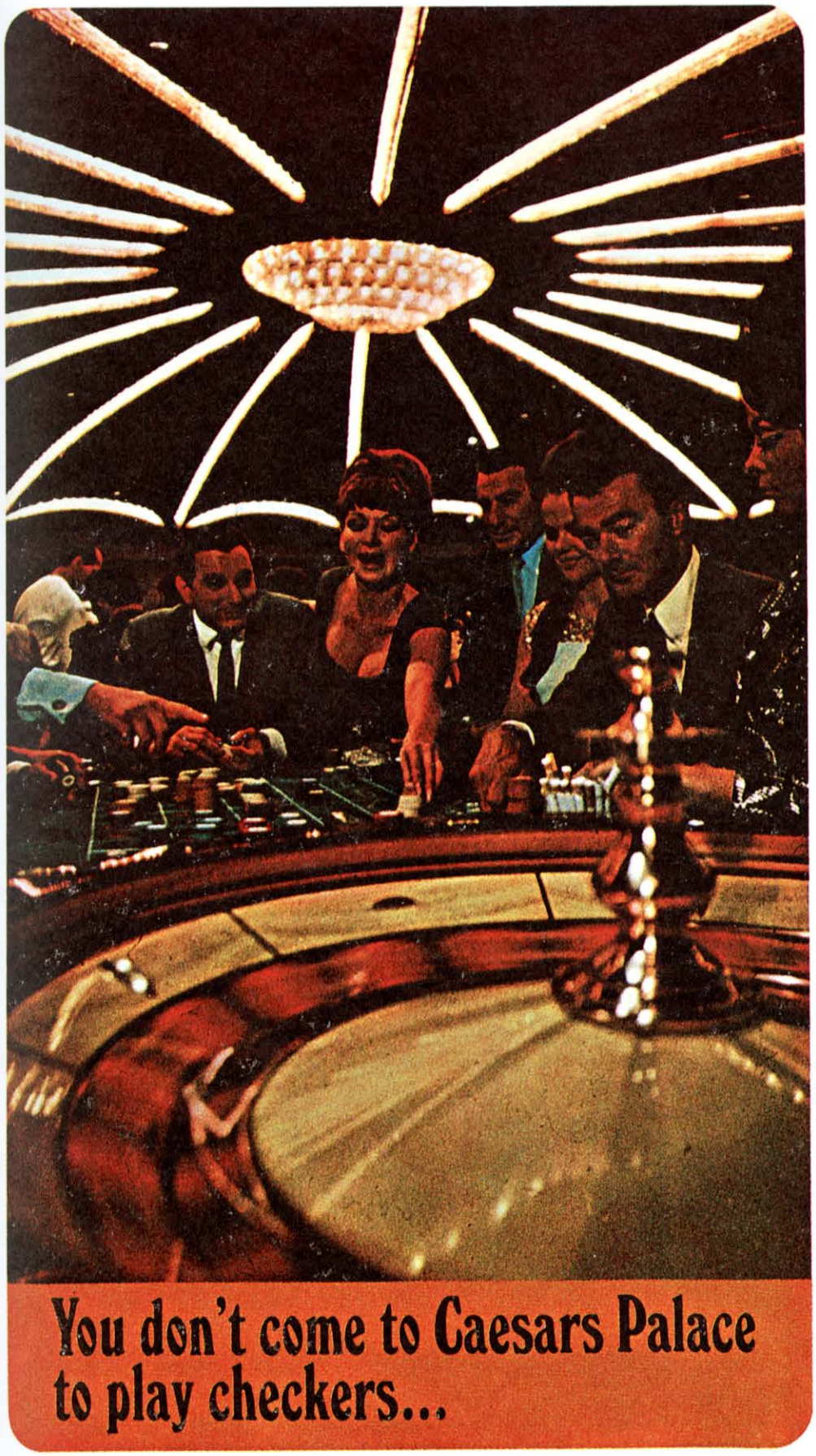
If the back of the casino is different from the front for the sake of visual impact in the "autoscape," the inside contrasts with the outside for other reasons. The interior sequence from the front door back progresses from gambling areas to dining, entertainment, and shopping areas, to hotel. Those who park at the side and enter there can interrupt the sequence. But the circulation of the whole focuses on the gambling rooms. In a Las Vegas hotel the registration desk is invariably behind you when you enter the lobby; before you are the gambling tables and machines. The lobby is the gambling room. The interior space and the patio, in their exaggerated separation from the environment, have the quality of an oasis.

Las Vegas Lighting

The gambling room is always very dark; the patio, always very bright. But both are enclosed: The former has no windows, and the latter is open only to the sky. The combination of darkness and enclosure of the gambling room and its subspaces makes for privacy, protection, concentration, and control. The intricate maze under the low ceiling never connects with outside light or outside space. This disorients the occupant in space and time. He loses track of where he is and when it is. Time is limitless, because the light of noon and midnight are exactly the same. Space is limitless, because the artificial light obscures rather than defines its boundaries. Light is not used to define space. Walls and ceilings do not serve as reflective surfaces for light but are made absorbent and dark. Space is enclosed but limitless, because its edges are dark. Light sources, chandeliers, and the glowing, jukeboxlike gambling machines themselves are independent of walls and ceilings. The lighting is antiarchitectural. Illuminated baldacchini, more than in all Rome, hover over tables in the limitless shadowy restaurant at the Sahara Hotel.[103]

Las Vegas daylight, like Greek daylight, makes the polychrome temples stand out proud and clear in the desert. This is a quality hard to catch on film. No photographs of the Acropolis do it justice. And Las Vegas is better known for its night light than its daylight.

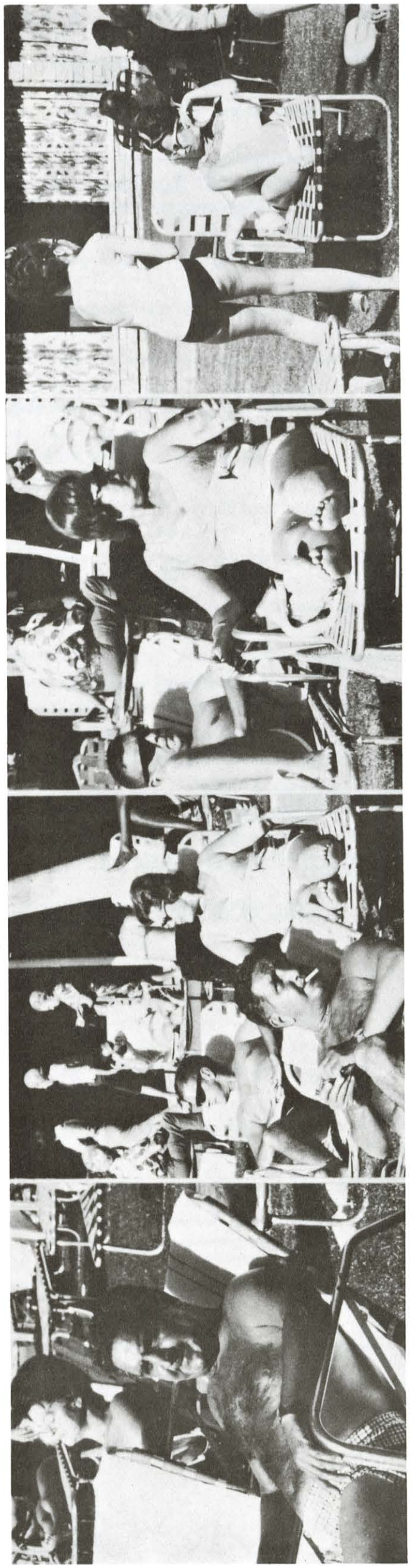
The artificially lit, air-conditioned interiors complement the glare and heat of the agoraphobic auto-scaled desert. But the interior of the motel patio behind the casino is literally the oasis in a hostile environment.[104] Whether Organic Modern or neo-Classical Baroque, it contains the fundamental elements of the classic oasis: courts, water, greenery, intimate scale, and enclosed space. Here they are a swimming pool, palms, grass, and other horticultural importations set in a paved court surrounded by hotel suites, balconied or terraced on the court side for privacy. What gives poignance to the beach umbrellas and chaises longues is the vivid, recent memory of the hostile cars poised in the asphalt desert beyond.[105] The pedestrian oasis in the Las Vegas desert is the princely enclosure of the Alhambra, and it is the apotheosis of all the motel courts with swimming pools more symbolic than useful, the plain, low restaurants with exotic interiors, and the pretty shopping malls of the American strip.



102. Caesars Palace tourist brochure

103. Sahara Casino and Hotel, Las Vegas. Don the Beachcombers Restaurant

104. Caesars Palace oasis



105. Pool people

Architectural Monumentality and the Big, Low Space

The casino in Las Vegas is big, low space. It is the archetype for all public interior spaces whose heights are diminished for reasons of budget and air conditioning. (The low, one-way-mirrored ceilings also permit outside observation of the gambling rooms.) In the past, volume was governed by structural span; height was relatively easy to achieve. Today, span is easy to achieve, and volume is governed by mechanical and economic limitations on height. But railroad stations, restaurants, and shopping arcades only ten feet high reflect as well a changing attitude to monumentality in our environment. In the past, big spans with their concomitant heights were an ingredient of architectural monu-

mentality. But our monuments are not the occasional tour de force of an Astrodome, a Lincoln Center, or a subsidized airport. These merely prove that big, high spaces do not automatically make architectural monumentality. We have replaced the monumental space of Pennsylvania Station by a subway above ground, and that of Grand Central Terminal remains mainly through its magnificent conversion to an advertising vehicle. Thus, we rarely achieve architectural monumentality when we try; our money and skill do not go into the traditional monumentality that expressed cohesion of the community through big-scale, unified, symbolic, architectural elements. Perhaps we should admit that our cathedrals are the chapels without the nave and that, apart from theaters and ball parks, the occasional communal space that is big is a space for crowds of anonymous individuals without explicit connection with each other. The big, low mazes of the dark restaurant with alcoves combine being together and yet separate as does the Las Vegas casino.

The lighting in the casino achieves a new monumentality for the low space. The controlled sources of artificial and colored light within the dark enclosures expand and unify the space by obscuring its physical limits. You are no longer in the bounded piazza but in the twinkling lights of the city at night.

The Fontainebleau

To get into the dining room you walk up three steps, open a pair of doors and walk out on a platform, and then walk down three steps. Now the dining room is at exactly the same level as my lobby, but as they walk up they reach the platform. I've got soft light lighting this thing up, and before they're seated, they are on stage as if they had been cast for the part. Everybody's looking at them; they're looking at everybody else.[5]

5. Morris Lapidus, Progressive Architecture (September 1970), p. 122.

OLD
monumentality

The nave

The big
① HIGH
② LIT and WINDOWED
③ OPEN
④ SPACE
⑤ UNCLUTTERED

for communal crowds

① High for monumentality

② Lit and windowed: natural & simulated daylight falls on walls to clarify the great architecture

③ Open: to let natural light in and lately to integrate the inside & outside

④ Space: spatiousness for communal crowds

⑤ Uncluttered: don't clutter up the great architecture.

NEW
monumentality

The chapels without the nave

The big
① LOW
② GLITTERING-in-the-DARK
③ ENCLOSED
④ MAZE of
⑤ ALCOVES and
⑥ FURNITURE

for separate people

① Low for economy of air conditioning

② glittering-in-the Dark: perimeters dark in value, absorbent in texture to obscure extent and character of the architectural enclosure. glittering light sources - mainly ornamental - and recessed ceiling spots to light people and furniture and not architecture.

Space is limitless because the artificial light observers rather than defines its boundaries. Light is not used to define space.

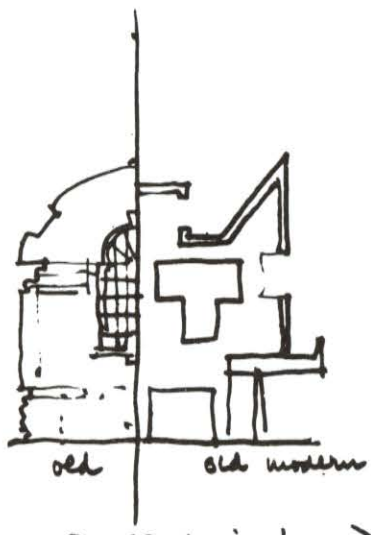
You are no longer in the bounded piazza but in the twinkling lights of the city at night.

③ Enclosed to exclude the outside to engender a different style and role inside

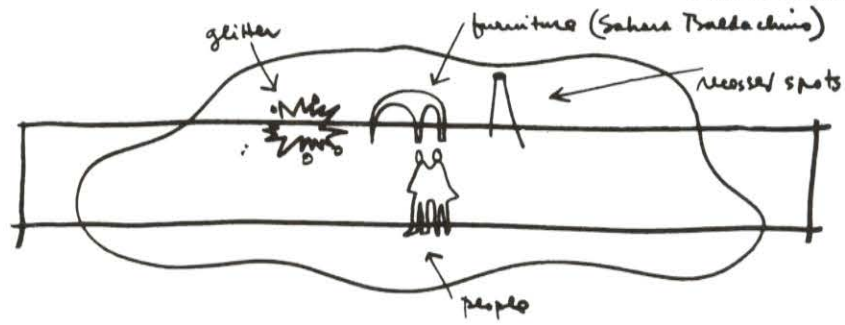
④ Maze for crowds of anonymous individuals without explicit connections with each other

⑤ Alcoves: people are together and yet separate

⑥ Furniture: objects and symbols dominate architecture.



Illuminated baldachini, more than in all Rome, hover over tables in the limitless shadowy restaurant at the Sahara Hotel.



part of Topic 8 (Building types)

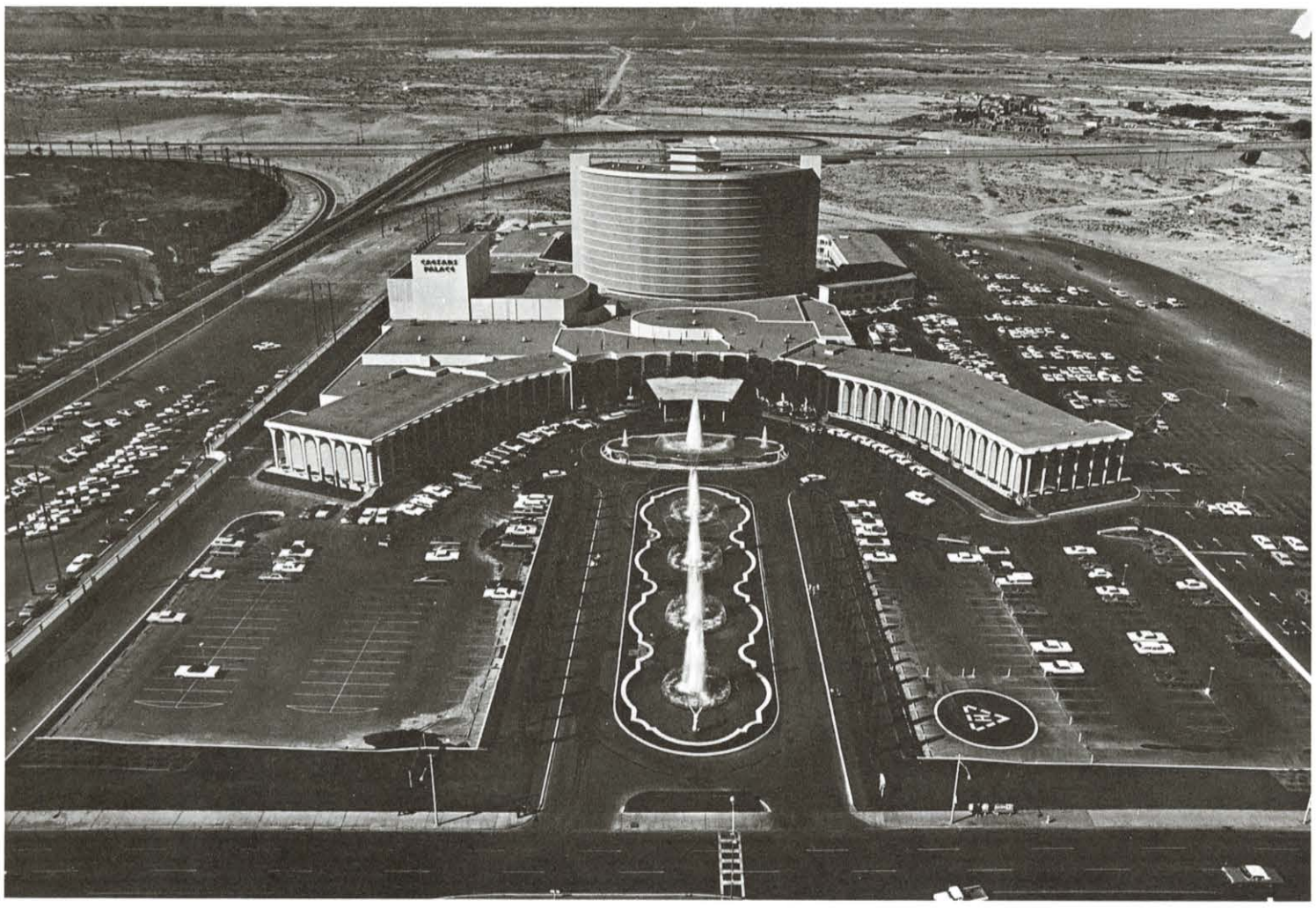
THE ROADSIDE INTERIOR

Las Vegas Styles

Miami Moroccan, International Jet Set Style; Arte Moderne Hollywood Orgasmic, Organic Behind; Yamasaki Bernini cum Roman Orgiastic; Niemeyer Moorish; Moorish Tudor (Arabian Knights); Bauhaus Hawaiian.

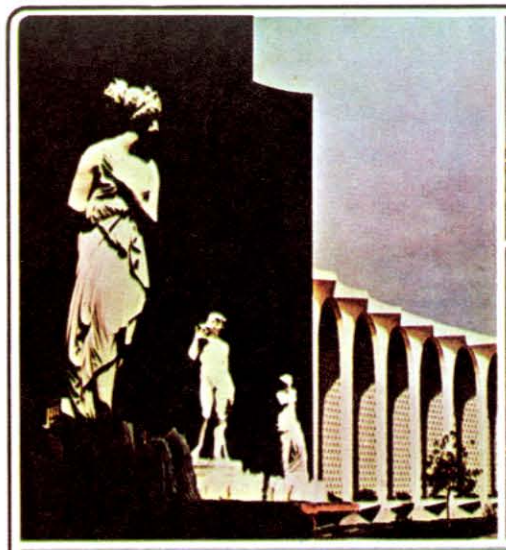
The Las Vegas casino is a combination form. The complex program of Caesars Palace — one of the grandest — includes gambling, dining and banqueting rooms, nightclubs and auditoria, stores, and a complete hotel. It is also a combination of styles. The front colonnade is San Pietro-Bernini in plan[107] but Yamasaki in vocabulary and scale[108]; the blue and gold mosaic work is Early Christian tomb of Galla Placidia. (The Baroque symmetry of its prototype precludes an inflection toward the right in this facade.) Beyond and above is a slab in Gio Ponti Pirelli-Baroque, and beyond that, in turn, a low wing in neo-Classical Motel Moderne. Economics has vanquished symmetry in a recent addition. But the new slab and the various styles are integrated by a ubiquity of Ed Stone screens.

The landscaping is also eclectic. Within the Piazza San Pietro is the token parking lot. Among the parked cars rise five fountains rather than the two of Carlo Maderno; Villa d'Este cypresses further punctuate the parking environment. Gian da Bologna's Rape of the Sabine Women[109-111] and statues of Venus and David, with slight anatomical exaggerations, grace the area around the porte cochere. Almost bisecting a Venus is an Avis, a sign identifying No. 2's offices[112, 113] on the premises.



107. Caesars Palace

108-110. Caesars Palace tourist brochures



The grandeur that was Rome...

I, CAESAR . . . command your attention to beauty and wonders beyond even the wildest dreams of any Roman Emperor! Truly a Palace of Pleasure! In the vital heart of pulsating Las Vegas this exciting and lush oasis is breathtaking to behold . . . lavish with gleaming statuary, gorgeous gardens and fabulous fountains! A mighty retinue of toga-clad palace attendants eagerly await your every summons! Come, indulge yourself!

You don't come to Caesars Palace to play checkers...

You don't come to Caesars Palace to curl up with a good book...

You don't come to Caesars Palace to play solitaire...

I, CAESAR . . . summon you to the pleasurable suspense of spinning wheels, tumbling dice and flashing cards in my Caesars Forum Casino!

STATUARY AT CAESARS PALACE

VENUS DE MEDICI, by Cleomenes, carved about 100 B.C., is an extraordinary example of the Hellenistic art. The inspiration for this famous statue of the Goddess attempting to cover her nakedness was the Venus of Chidus, and was commissioned by the Medicis family. The Medicis ruled the city of Florence during the days of the Remaissance, a period of artistic splendor and achievement, and they subsidized a number of talented painters and sculptors. This Venus now stands in Galleria Uffizi, in Florence, Italy.

VICTORY AT SAMOTHRACE, by an unknown sculptor, was created about 300 B.C. This winged figure of victory, discovered in the Aegean island of Samothrace, was originally designed for the prow of the ship sailed by Piliocretes. The nobility and beauty of this monumental art work is honored by being given a place of special distinction in the famous Louvre Museum, in Paris, France.

CAESARS PALACE takes pride in presenting these magnificently achieved Carrara marble statues, imported from Italy and representing some of the greatest art treasures of modern man.

In tribute to a Roman patron Michaelangelo once observed that the artist and sculptor created their art works to sate their own needs and hungers, but that those who glorified the works of others by displaying these treasures were the most noble of all men, since they were perpetuating a culture for all the world.

The brilliant contemporary sculptor, Sir Henry Moore, said: "Sculpture is an art of free space. It needs daylight, sunlight. Nature seems to be its best setting..." In recognition of this, the CAESARS PALACE landscaping and architecture were designed to achieve the most effective and beautiful setting for these great works of art.

CAESARS PALACE
3570 LAS VEGAS BLVD., SOUTH · LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89109

The statues on display at CAESARS PALACE are carved in sparkling white Carrara marble, cut from the mountain in Italy from which Michaelangelo took his stone.

RAPE OF THE SABINES, by Giovanni Bologna; completed in 1583. The classic marble masterpiece was inspired by the machination of Romulos, when he invited the naive citizens of a neighboring tribe to participate in a Roman festival. When they arrived, the Roman warriors, desperately in need of wives, captured and fled with the Sabine women. The war between the Romans and the Sabines gradually subsided and ended in a union between the two peoples. This classic sculpture, reflecting the horror of the attack upon the women, now stands in the Palazzo Vecchio, in Florence, Italy.

VENUS DE MILO, by an unknown sculptor, is one of the most famous of all artistic achievements, and is believed to have been carved about 200 B.C. This magnificent work depicting the Goddess of Love and Beauty is considered to be the most superbly definitive symbol of femine grace and form. The original occupies a place of great prestige at the Louvre Museum, in Paris, France.

VENUS, by Antonio Canova, completed about 1800, shows the lovely Goddess just as she has stepped from the sea. The suppleness of form and the flow of line in this distinguished piece of art contributed to the recognition earned by Canova as the greatest Italian sculptor of the 18th century. Another of his famous works is the statue of Napoleon's beautiful sister, Paolina Borghese. Canova's Venus stands in the Uffizi Gallery, in Florence, Italy.

BACCHUS, by Michaelangelo, completed during the 15th century, represents the Greek God of Wine, and was commissioned by a collector of antiques. For many years it remained in the courtyard of the antique collector and was not immediately recognized as the work of the man considered to be the most masterful and talented of all sculptors. When it was learned Michaelangelo had carved the Bacchus, the statue was moved to the National Museum, in Florence, Italy.

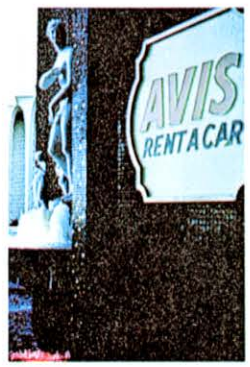
HEBE, by Adrian de Vries, carved during the 16th Century, is a lovely representation of the daughter of Zeus and Era. Lithe and joyful, exquisitely feminine, this work has achieved great distinction as an example of classic sculpture, and is owned by a private collector.

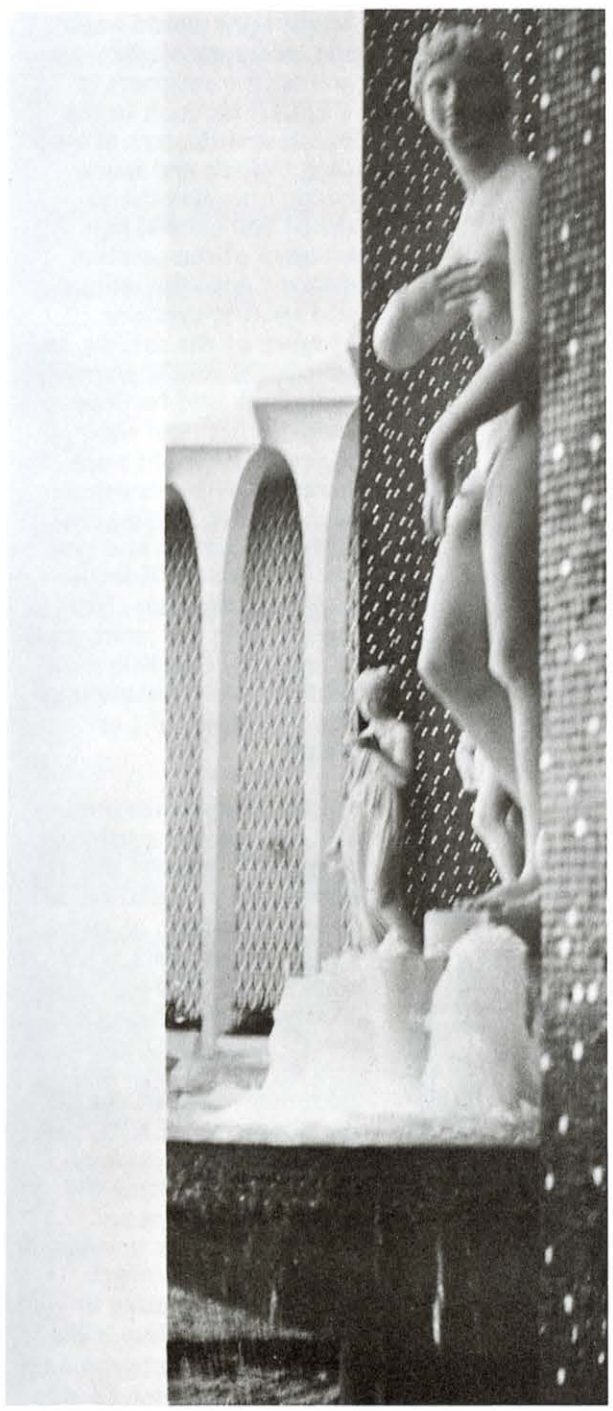
DAVID, by Michaelangelo, completed in the 15th Century, is regarded as the great artist's second most celebrated work, the most famous being his Pieta. The statue of David, young King of the Hebrews, shows him as a young, strong boy just after he has slain the giant, Goliath. The masterpiece captured the ethereal beauty of the young boy's face, and the remarkable statue was carved directly from one large block of Cararra marble. The original is kept at the Galleria dell' Academia, in Florence, Italy.

The agglomeration of Caesars Palace and of the Strip as a whole approaches the spirit if not the style of the late Roman Forum with its eclectic accumulations. But the sign of Caesars Palace with its Classical, plastic columns is more Etruscan in feeling than Roman. **114** Although not so high as the Dunes Hotel sign next door or the Shell sign on the other side, its base is enriched by Roman centurions, **115-117** lacquered like Oldenburg hamburgers, who peer over the acres of cars and across their desert empire to the mountains beyond. Their statuesque escorts, carrying trays of fruit, suggest the festivities within and are a background for the family snapshots of Middle Westerners. Massive Miesian light boxes announce square, expensive entertainers such as Jack Benny in 1930s-style marquee lettering appropriate for Benny if not for the Roman architrave it almost ornaments. **118, 119** The light boxes are not in the architrave; they are located off-center on the columns in order to inflect toward the highway and the parking.

People are looking for illusions; they don't want the world's realities. And, I asked, where do I find this world of illusion? Where are their tastes formulated? Do they study it in school? Do they go to museums? Do they travel in Europe? Only one place — the movies. They go to the movies. The hell with everything else. [6]

6. Ibid., p. 120.

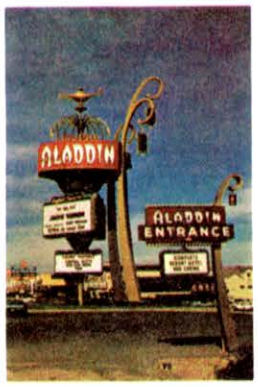




114. Piranesi's Pantheon/
Caesars Palace sign

115-119. Caesars Palace

111-113. Caesars Palace



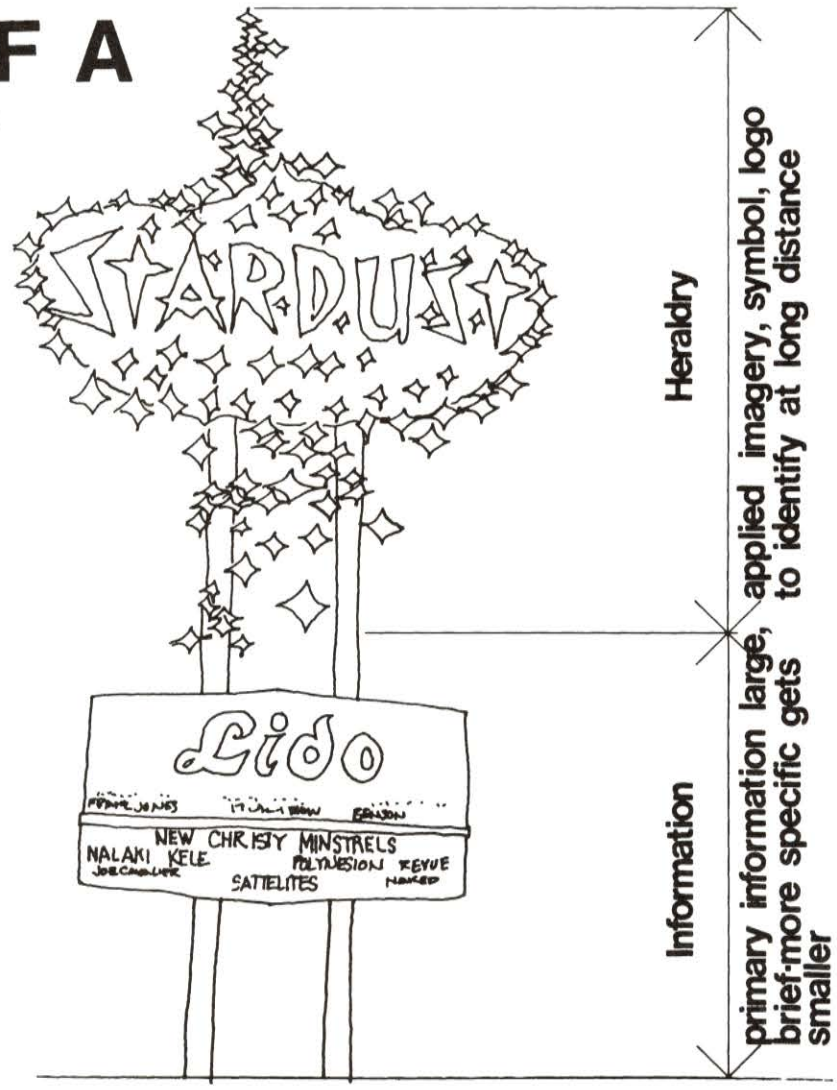
120. Aladdin sign

121, 122. Dunes sign

123-126. Stardust sign

127. Physiognomy of a typical casino sign

PHYSIOGNOMY OF A TYPICAL CASINO SIGN



The time is ripe for a scholar to write his doctoral dissertation on signs. He would need literary as well as artistic acumen, because the same reason that makes signs Pop Art (the need for high-speed communication with maximum meaning) makes them Pop literature as well. For example, this one from Philadelphia:

O. R. LUMPKIN. BODY-BUILDERS. FENDERS STRAIGHTENED. WRECKS OUR SPECIALTY. WE TAKE THE DENT OUT OF ACCIDENT.

We shall be analyzing and categorizing the signs of Las Vegas by content and form, by function (night and day) and location, as well as by size, color, structure, and method of construction, trying to understand what makes the "Las Vegas style" in signs and what we can learn from them about an impure architecture of form and symbols.

A stylistic analysis of Las Vegas signs would trace the influence of the greats (the designers in YESCO) through to the minor architecture of wedding chapels and sauna baths, compare the national and general sign imagery of the gasoline stations with the unique and specific symbolic imagery of the casinos, and follow the influence patterns back and forth between artists and sign makers. It would trace parallels with historical architecture that emphasizes association and symbolism, such as Romanticism, eclecticism, Mannerism, and the iconographic aspects of Gothic architecture, and tie these into the sign styles of Las Vegas.

In the seventeenth century, Rubens created a painting "factory" wherein different workers specialized in drapery, foliage, or nudes. In Las Vegas there is just such a sign "factory," the Young Electric Sign Company. Someone should talk to and observe and document each of the departments in YESCO; find out the backgrounds of the designers; watch the whole design process. Is there a private vocabulary for sign designers such as that existing in architecture? How is the contradiction between form and function resolved in

Las Vegas Signs

Signs inflect toward the highway even more than buildings. The big sign — independent of the building and more or less sculptural or pictorial — inflects by its position, perpendicular to and at the edge of the highway, by its scale and sometimes by its shape. The sign of the Aladdin Hotel and Casino seems to bow toward the highway through the inflection in its shape. **120** It also is three dimensional, and parts of it revolve. The sign at the Dunes Hotel is more chaste: It is only two dimensional, and its back echoes its front, but it is an erection 22 stories high that pulsates at night. **121, 122** The sign for The Mint Hotel on Route 91 at Fremont Street inflects toward the Casino several blocks away.

Signs in Las Vegas use mixed media — words, pictures, and sculpture — to persuade and inform. A sign is, contradictorily, for day and night. The same sign works as polychrome sculpture in the sun and as black silhouette against the sun; at night it is a source of light. It revolves by day and becomes a play of lights at night. **123-126** It contains scales for close-up and for distance. **127** Las Vegas has the longest sign in the world, the Thunderbird, and the highest, the Dunes. Some signs are hardly distinguishable at a distance from the occasional high-rise hotels along the Strip. The sign of the Pioneer Club on Fremont Street talks. Its cowboy, 60 feet high, says "Howdy Pardner" every 30 seconds. The big sign at the Aladdin Hotel has spawned a little sign with similar proportions to mark the entrance to the parking. "But such signs!" says Tom Wolfe.

They soar in shapes before which the existing vocabulary of art history is helpless. I can only attempt to supply names — Boomerang Modern, Palette Curvilinear, Flash Gordon Ming-Alert Spiral, McDonald's Hamburger Parabola, Mint Casino Elliptical, Miami Beach Kidney.[7] **130-227**

7. Tom Wolfe, The Kandy-Colored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby (New York: Noonday Press, 1966), p. 8.

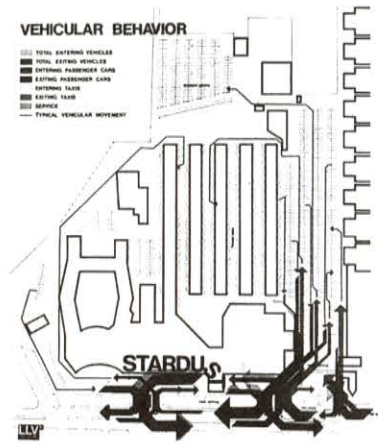
Buildings are also signs. At night on Fremont Street, whole buildings are illuminated but not through reflection from spotlights; they are made into sources of light by closely spaced neon tubes. Amid the diversity, the familiar Shell and Gulf signs stand out like friendly beacons in a foreign land. But in Las Vegas they reach three times higher into the air than at your local service station to meet the competition of the casinos.

sign design? Carefully photograph the sign models.

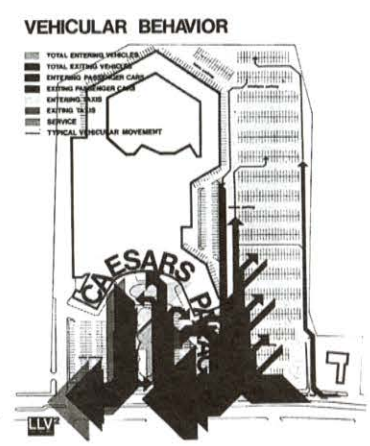
How do people actually use Route 91, the median strips, the entrance ways to casinos, the parking lots, and the pedestrian access? How do they react to signs?

Report on a Survey of Drivers Entering Hotel Driveways: 128, 129

1. Most drivers took the first entrance available to them after becoming aware of the limits of the property of the place they desired to go to.
2. Most people disregarded the sign and planned internal workings of the parking lot as determined by the designer. Note the Circus Circus casino sign.
3. The location of the signs and the other parking lot furniture seemed to have little influence on the use of the lot.
4. The apparent property line is a controlling element in the way people see the parking lot.
5. Visual elements, such as the fountains at Caesars Palace and Circus Circus, control the drivers more powerfully than any of the other directional signs. (John Kranz and Tony Zunino)



128. Traffic study: Stardust Hotel

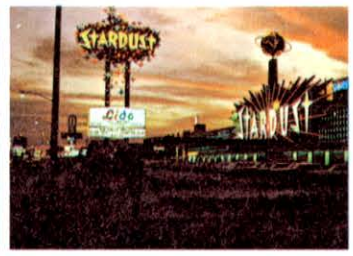


129. Traffic study: Caesars Palace

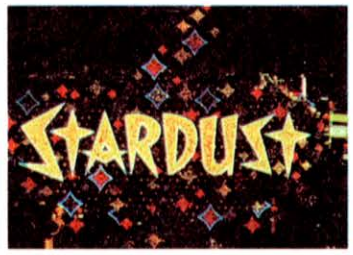
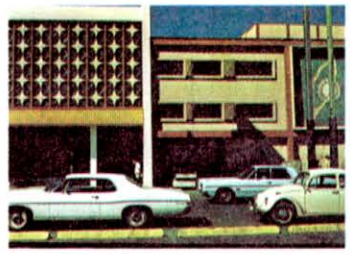
130-227. More Las Vegas signs and buildings (overleaf)

STARDUST

STARDUST

66

STARDUST
STARDUST

STARDUST

STARDUST

STARDUST


STARDUST
TEXACO
TEXA

TEXACO

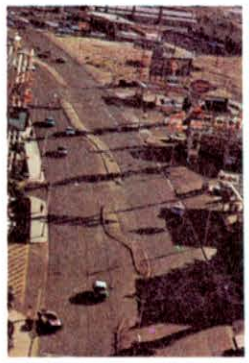
Gulf

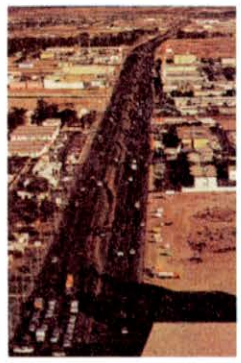
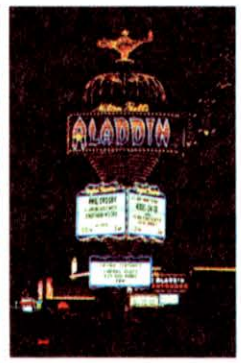
Gulf
Gulf

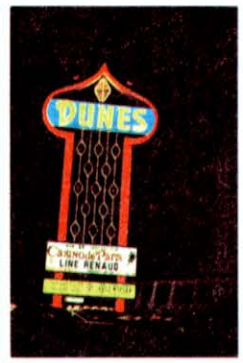
Gulf

SHELL

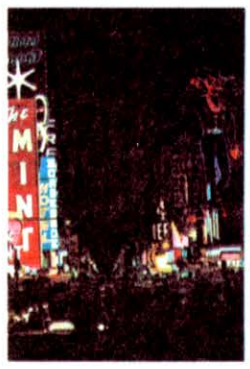
SHELL
SHELL

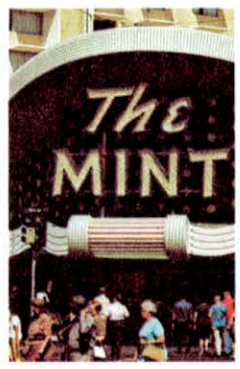
CASTRO
KING




ALADDIN

DUNES

DUNES

Flamingo
ENTER

Flamingo

MINT

The
MINT

The
MINT

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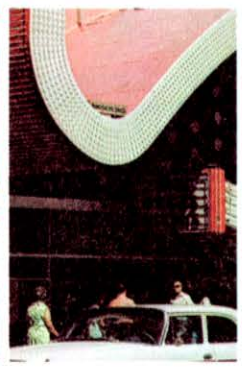
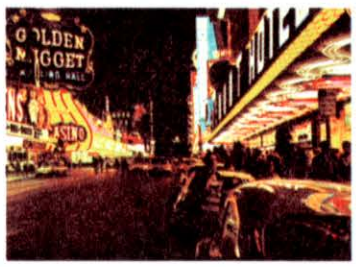


DAILY
NIGHTLY

GO

GOLDEN NUGGET
SINO

SINO

SINO

The
MINT

STARDUST

STARDUST

STARDUST

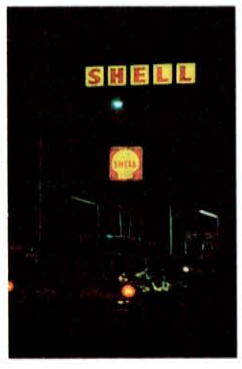
STARDUST

SOLARCAIN

ALADDIN
66
45
RESTAURANT
Pouigi

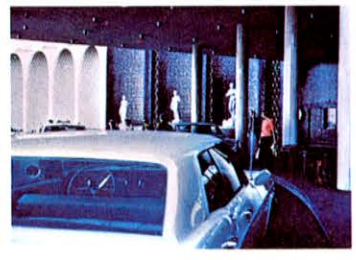
ALADDIN

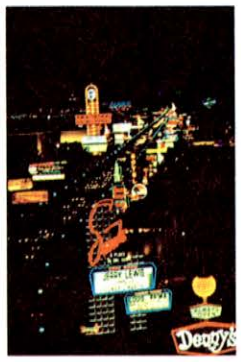
SHELL

SHELL

SHELL

SHELL

AMERICAN

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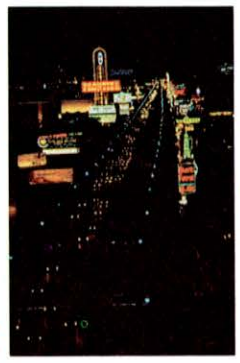
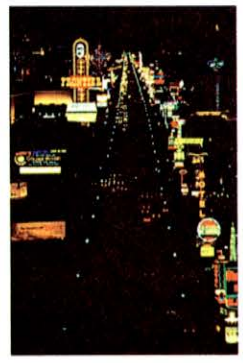
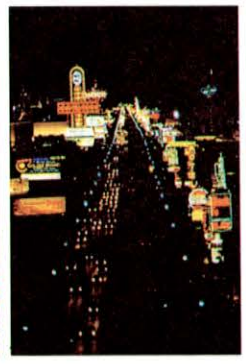
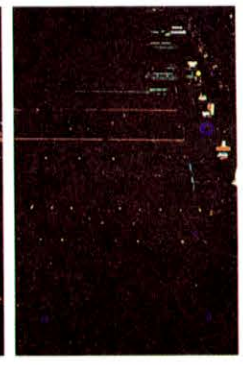
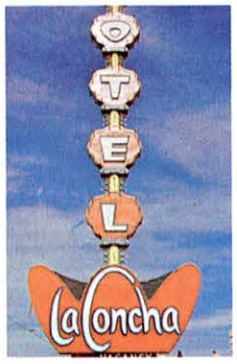
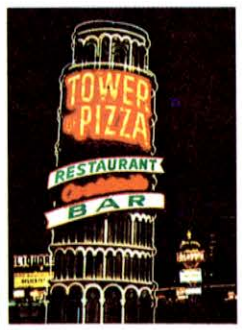
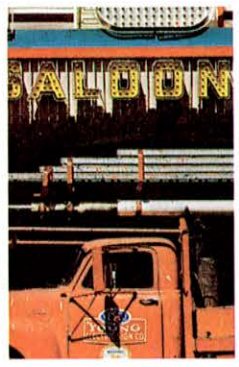
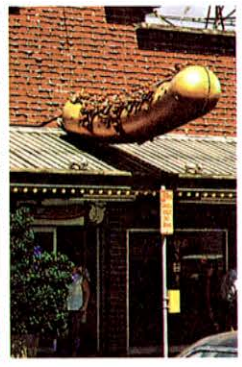
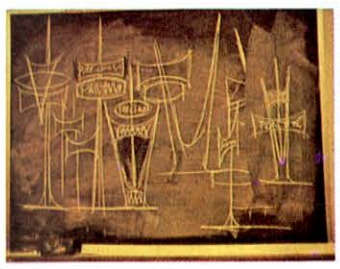





HOLIDAY
MOTEL

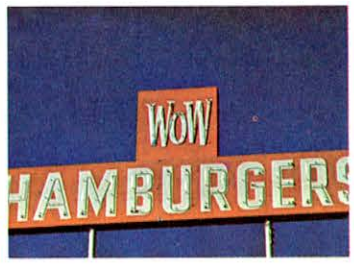
CHAPEL


HOTEL
La Concha

TOWER OF PIZZA
RESTAURANT
BAR



5TH ST.
LIQUOR
STORE
BEER
BAR

Jackpot
ARCADE


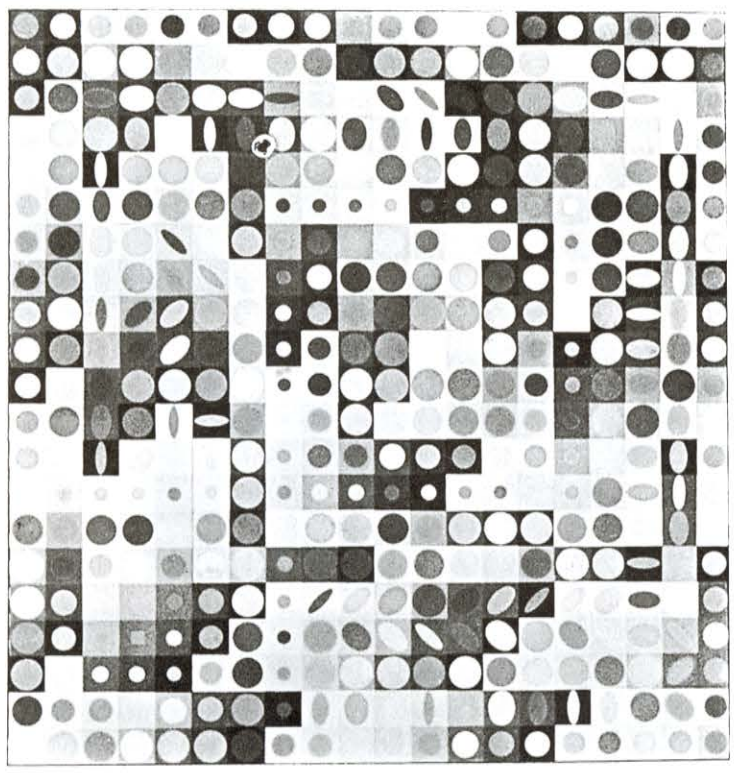
PYRAMID

Barry Ashton's
BURLESQUE
GIRLS GIRLS
NO COVER

WOW
HAMBURGERS

VEGAS
ENTRANCE

Inclusion and the Difficult Order

Henri Bergson called disorder an order we cannot see. The emerging order of the Strip is a complex order. It is not the easy, rigid order of the urban renewal project or the fashionable "total design" of the megastructure. It is, on the contrary, a manifestation of an opposite direction in architectural theory: Broadacre City – a travesty of Broadacre City, perhaps, but a kind of vindication of Frank Lloyd Wright's predictions for the American landscape. The commercial strip within the urban sprawl is, of course, Broadacre City with a difference. Broadacre City's easy, motival order identified and unified its vast spaces and separate buildings at the scale of the omnipotent automobile. Each building, without doubt, was to be designed by the Master or by his Taliesin Fellowship, with no room for honky-tonk improvisations. An easy control would be exercised over similar elements within the universal, Usonian vocabulary to the exclusion, certainly, of commercial vulgarities. But the order of the Strip includes; it includes at all levels, from the mixture of seemingly incongruous land uses to the mixture of seemingly incongruous advertising media plus a system of neo-Organic or neo-Wrightian restaurant motifs in Walnut Formica. It is not an order dominated by the expert and made easy for the eye. The moving eye in the moving body must work to pick out and interpret a variety of changing, juxtaposed orders, like the shifting configurations of a Victor Vasarely painting. It is the unity that "maintains, but only just maintains, a control over the clashing elements which compose it. Chaos is very near; its nearness, but its avoidance, gives . . . force."[11]



228. Victor Vasarely

Modern systems! Yes, indeed! To approach everything in a strictly methodical manner and not to waver a hair's breadth from preconceived patterns, until genius has been strangled to death and joie de vivre stifled by the system – that is the sign of our time.[8]

8. Camillo Sitte, City Planning According to Artistic Principles, translated by George R. Collins and Christiane Crasemann Collins (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 91.

It is fruitless, however, to search for some dramatic key element or king pin which, if made clear, will clarify all. No single element in a city is, in truth, the king pin. The mixture is the king pin, and its mutual support is the order.[9]

9. Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 376.

The Key word is: Proportion. No matter what you may call it – beauty, eye appeal, good taste, or architectural compatibility, limiting the size of electrical advertising displays does not ensure any of these. Proper proportions – the relationship of graphic elements to each other – are necessary to good design, whether it be a matter of clothing, art, architecture, or an electrical sign. Relative size, not over-all size, is the factor in determining guidelines which will satisfactorily influence attractive appearance.[10]

10. "Guideline Standards for On Premise Signs," prepared specifically for Community Planning Authorities by California Electric Sign Association, Los Angeles, Calif. (1967), p. 14.

Should a gas station on the Strip be required to blend with (that is, look like) the casinos?

How can a design intention be differentiated graphically from one possible design among many that might stem from a design control?

Computer-video urban simulation systems suggest possibilities for controls to be tried out through the simulation of environments. Imaginatively used, this could make for looser yet more efficient controls.

11. August Heckscher, The Public Happiness (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1962), p. 289.

CONTROLS AND BEAUTIFICATION

The Las Vegas Strip "just grew," and perhaps its initiators built it outside the city limits in order to escape controls. But today there are the usual building and zoning controls and a "Strip Beautification Committee" as well. There is no good record of commissions on aesthetics producing good architecture. (Haussmann was not a commission but a one-man control system. His power and its results are dubiously desirable and certainly unattainable today.) Commissions produce mediocrity and a deadened urb. What will happen to the Strip when the taste-makers take over? 229

Sign Control

The basic premises of three major parties are as follows:

Aesthetician: "Urban environment as medium of communication. . .Signs should enchance and clarify this communication."

Sign Industry: "Signs are good, they're good for business, that makes 'um good for H'america too."

Legal Statutes: "If you'll just perform these minimal requirements we can collect a fee for the city and you gentlemen can continue your sender-message-receiver responses." (Charles Korn)

229. A message to the Strip Beautification Committee

Concerning Strip Beautification

a message to the Strip Beautification Commission

Not the image of the Champs Elysées

trees block views of signs
grass medians are hard to maintain
lots of greenery and water raise humidity level of city

Best things strip has are signs & architecture

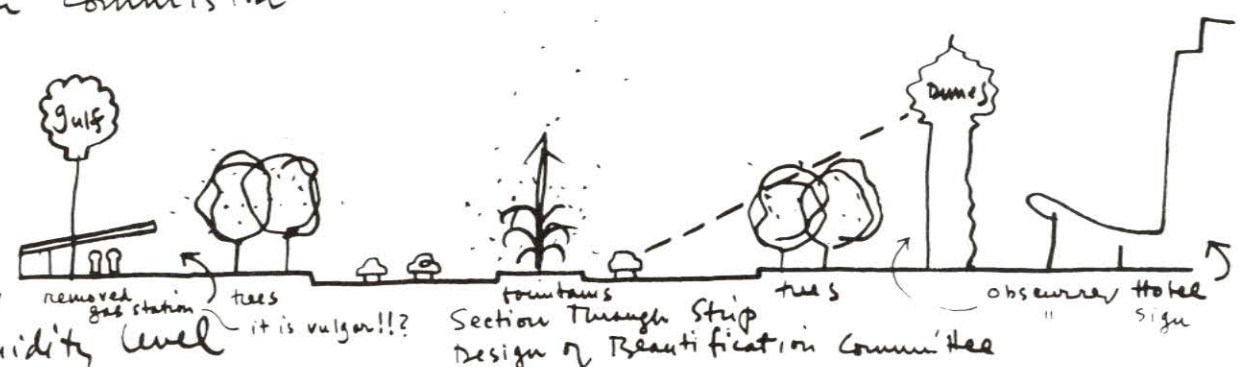
Gas Stations are all right
Their standard image plays against the unique architecture of the hotels
(in fact the gas stations are tasteful in comparison with the hotels)

Motel should be the New East:
Tile
Mosaics
Maximum effect with a minimum amount of water
\+ Electro-graphics

The Median of the Strip should be paved in gold

Remember the hours of the Strip

parking lots



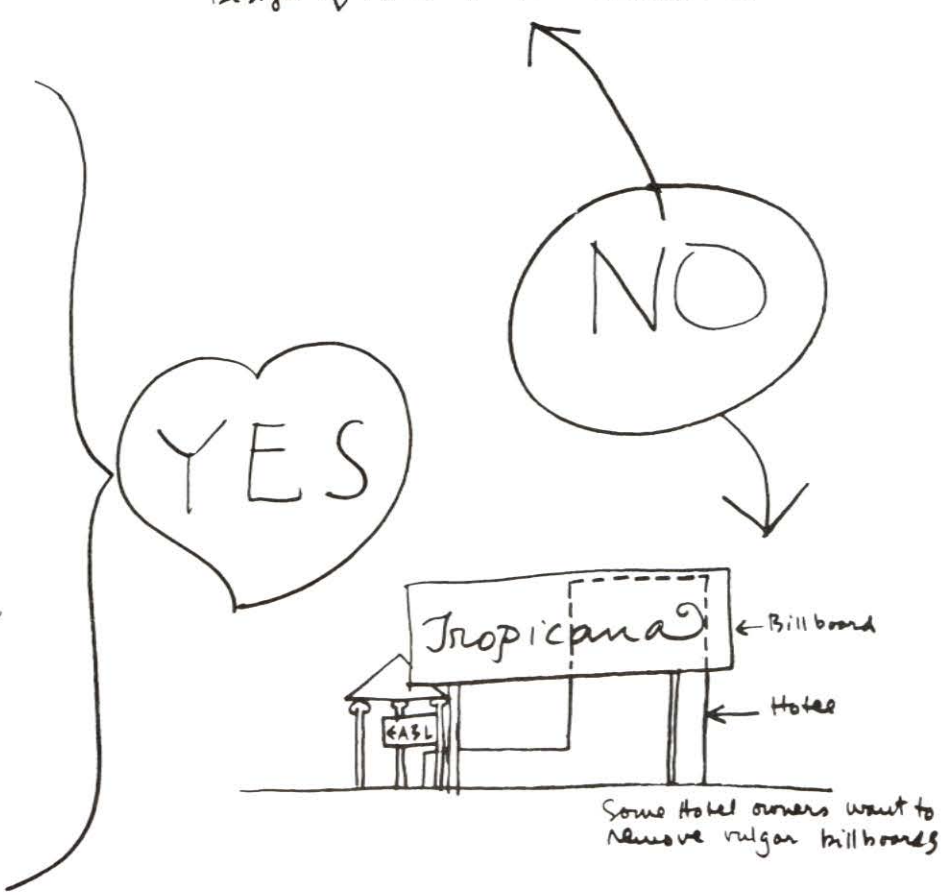


Image of Las Vegas: Inclusion and Allusion in Architecture

Tom Wolfe used Pop prose to suggest powerful images of Las Vegas. Hotel brochures and tourist handouts suggest others.[230, 231] J. B. Jackson, Robert Riley, Edward Ruscha, John Kouwenhoven, Reyner Banham, and William Wilson have elaborated on related images. For the architect or urban designer, comparisons of Las Vegas with others of the world's "pleasure zones"[232] – with Marienbad, the Alhambra, Xanadu, and Disneyland, for instance – suggest that essential to the imagery of pleasure-zone architecture are lightness, the quality of being an oasis in a perhaps hostile context, heightened symbolism, and the ability to engulf the visitor in a new role – for three days he may imagine himself a centurion at Caesars Palace, a ranger at the Frontier, or a jet-set playboy at the Riviera rather than a salesman from Des Moines, Iowa, or an architect from Haddonfield, New Jersey.

An image for a designer should be something very evocative, something that does not limit him by being too defined and too concrete, yet helps him think of the city in physical terms. Laughing or crying faces or people sitting at gambling machines are not enough. What is an urban designer's image, or set of images, for the Strip and the big low spaces of the casinos? What techniques – movie, graphic, or other – should be used to depict them?

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries an integral part of an architect's education consisted of sketching Roman ruins. If the eighteenth century architect discovered his design gestalt by means of the Grand Tour and his sketch pad, we as twentieth-century architects will have to find our own "sketch pad" for Las Vegas.

We feel that we should construct our visual image of Las Vegas by means of a collage made from Las Vegas artifacts of many types and sizes, from YESCO signs to the Caesars Palace daily calendar. To construct this collage, you should collect images, verbal slogans, and objects. Bear in mind that, however diverse the pieces, they must be juxtaposed in a meaningful way, for example, as are Rome and Las Vegas in this study. Document the American piazza versus the Roman, and Nolli's Rome versus the Strip.

However, there are didactic images more important than the images of recreation for us to take home to New Jersey and Iowa: one is the Avis with the Venus; another, Jack Benny under a classical pediment with Shell Oil beside him, or the gasoline station beside the multimillion-dollar casino. These show the vitality that may be achieved by an architecture of inclusion or, by contrast, the deadness that results from too great a preoccupation with tastefulness and total design. The Strip shows the value of symbolism and allusion in an architecture of vast space and speed and proves that people, even architects, have fun with architecture that reminds them of something else, perhaps of harems or the Wild West in Las Vegas, perhaps of the nation's New England forebears in New Jersey. Allusion and comment, on the past or present or on our great commonplaces or old clichés, and inclusion of the everyday in the environment, sacred and profane – these are what are lacking in present-day Modern architecture. We can learn about them from Las Vegas as have other artists from their own profane and stylistic sources.

Pop artists have shown the value of the old cliché used in a new context to achieve a new meaning – the soup can in the art gallery – to make the common uncommon. And in literature, Eliot and Joyce display, according to Poirier, an extraordinary vulnerability . . . to the idioms, rhythms, artifacts, associated with certain urban environments or situations. The multitudinous styles of Ulysses are so dominated by them that there are only intermittent sounds of Joyce in the novel and no extended passage certifiably in his as distinguished from a mimicked style.[12] Poirier refers to this as the "decreative impulse."[13] Eliot himself speaks of Joyce's doing the best he can "with the material at hand."[14] Perhaps a fitting requiem for the irrelevant works of Art that are today's descendants of a once meaningful Modern architecture are Eliot's lines in "East Coker":

12. Richard Poirier, "T. S. Eliot and the Literature of Waste," The New Republic (May 20, 1967) p. 20.

13. Ibid., p. 21.

14. T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958), p. 125.

CASINO CENTER — Fremont Street — Downtown Las Vegas

LasV GAS

THE ENTERTAINMENT CAPITOL OF THE WORLD

LAS VEGAS! . . . glittering mecca in the heart of the golden West, where world travelers discover unsurpassed gaiety and entertainment in the luxurious resorts along the fabled "Strip" and "Casino Center," where a billion candlepower turns night into day . . . Dazzling stage spectaculars from Broadway and Europe showcase the world's greatest entertainers, and top stars of stage, screen and television. . . .

LAS VEGAS! . . . excitement and glamour around-the-clock, inspiring the happy vacationer to this exclamation: *"Most fabulous city on earth!"*

a whirl of fun and excitement!

Miles of neon and millions of flashing lights illuminate Casino Center in downtown Las Vegas and the "Strip," site of the multi-million dollar resort hotels.

Elaborate theater-restaurants provide a glamorous setting for spectacular Continental productions and Broadway shows.

VARIETY BUFFET TIME

You'll want to know!

ACCOMMODATIONS

Located within minutes of each other are more than 20,000 first class rooms and suites in 13 major hotels, 35 commercial hotels and hundreds of motels, all modestly priced. Sports and resort facilities, from olympic-size swimming pools to championship golf courses, are available.

RESERVATIONS

Room reservations should be made in advance, particularly on weekends. Show reservations may be made by telephone on arrival. Reservations are not required for lounge shows. Complete listings of hotel and motel accommodations and current entertainment may be obtained by writing the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce.

RESTAURANTS

Las Vegas is a gourmet's paradise. In addition to the superb cuisine of the theater-restaurants, the resort hotels and clubs serve delicious meals 24 hours a day in cheerful, roomy coffee shops. Evening diners may prefer the intimate continental restaurants or late hour variety buffets.

GUIDED TOURS

Bus tours of Las Vegas, Hoover Dam and Lake Mead are scheduled daily from convenient locations. Group tours are easily arranged.

CHURCHES

Las Vegas area has more churches per capita than any city in the nation, with more than 100 churches representing all major denominations.

CLIMATE

Las Vegas enjoys ideal year-around climate. Spring and fall days are warm, with nights cool and refreshing. Average summer temperatures are in the 90's. Air conditioning and extremely low humidity make for comfort indoors and out. Informal dress is the rule.

HELLDORADO

During four days in May, Las Vegas turns back the clock a hundred years as residents and visitors alike don western garb to celebrate Helldorado. Four action-packed rodeos, beauty contests and three parades are included in this gala event.

TRANSPORTATION

Las Vegas is served by seven major airlines: Bonanza, Delta, National, Pacific, TWA, United and Western; the Union Pacific Railroad; Greyhound, Continental and Las Vegas-Tonopah-Reno Stage Lines. Four major highways, U.S. 91, 93, 95 and 466 intersect in Las Vegas, connecting it with major population centers of the West.

INFORMATION

Complete Las Vegas information may be obtained by writing the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, 2301 East Sahara Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada.

230-231. Tourist brochures

PLEASURE ZONES
CHARACTERISTICS

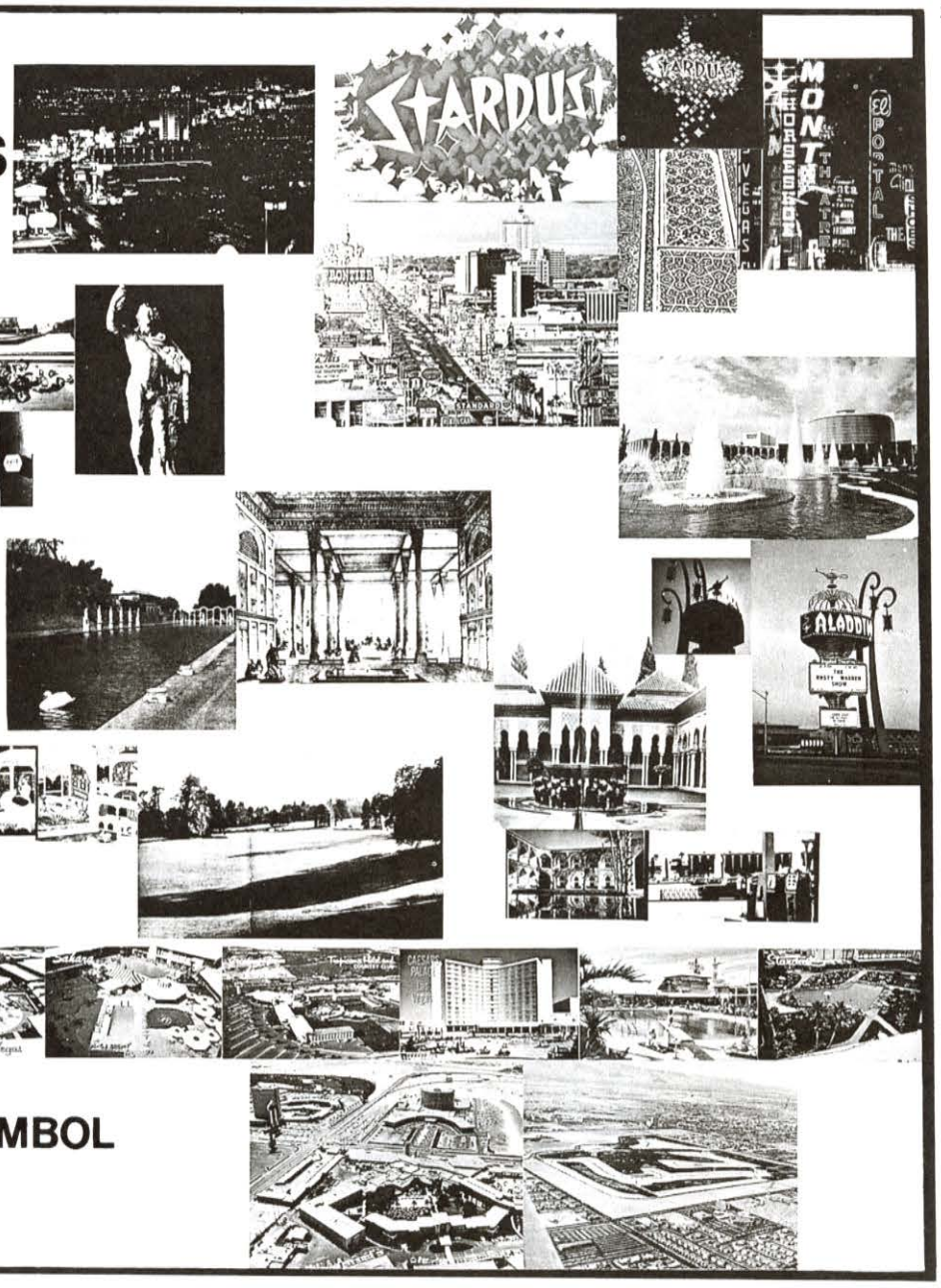
LIGHT ARCHITECTURE
lacy and diminutive
Yamasaki modern

IN A HOSTILE CONTEXT, THE OASIS
desert
ocean
parking lots
fortifications

SYMBOLIC ARCHITECTURE AND GARDENS
late periods
erotic
arcadian
Romantic etc.

ROLE PLAYING
eclectic resort hotels of Morris Lapidus
Versailles

MIAMI BEACH
MARIENBAD
ATLANTIC CITY
XANADU
SHOPPING CENTER
BATH
ALHAMBRA
DISNEYLAND
PERSIAN GARDEN
WORLDS FAIR
HADRIAN'S VILLA
LAS VEGAS
MIAMI BEACH
MARIENBAD
ATLANTIC CITY
XANADU
SHOPPING CENTER
BATH
ALHAMBRA
DISNEYLAND
PERSIAN GARDEN
WORLDS FAIR
HADRIAN'S VILLA
LAS VEGAS
MIAMI BEACH



SPACE·SCALE·SPEED·SYMBOL

232. A comparative analysis of Pleasure Zones

That was a way of putting it —

not very satisfactory:

A periphrastic study in a worn-

out poetical fashion,

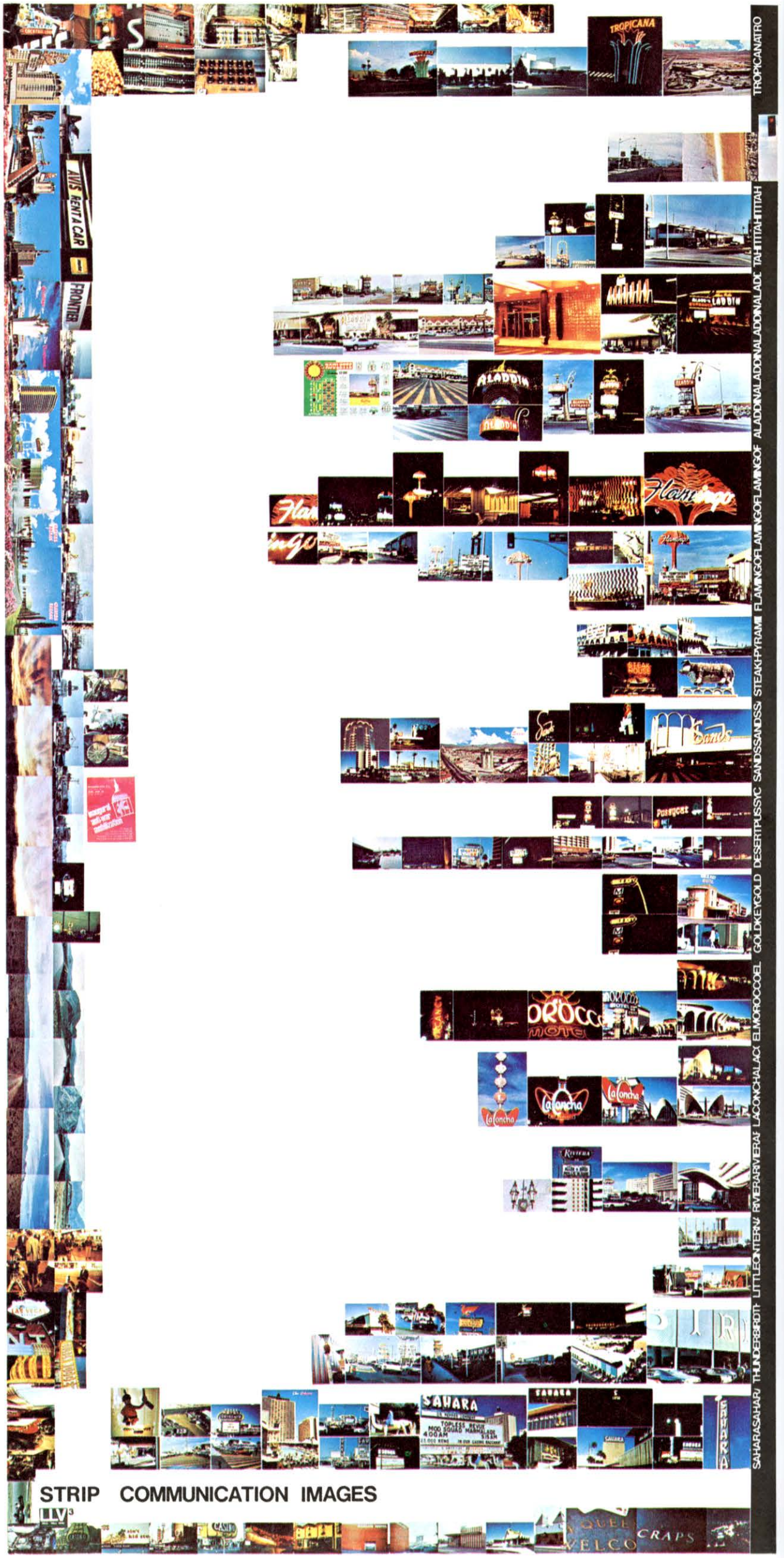
Leaving one still with the

intolerable wrestle

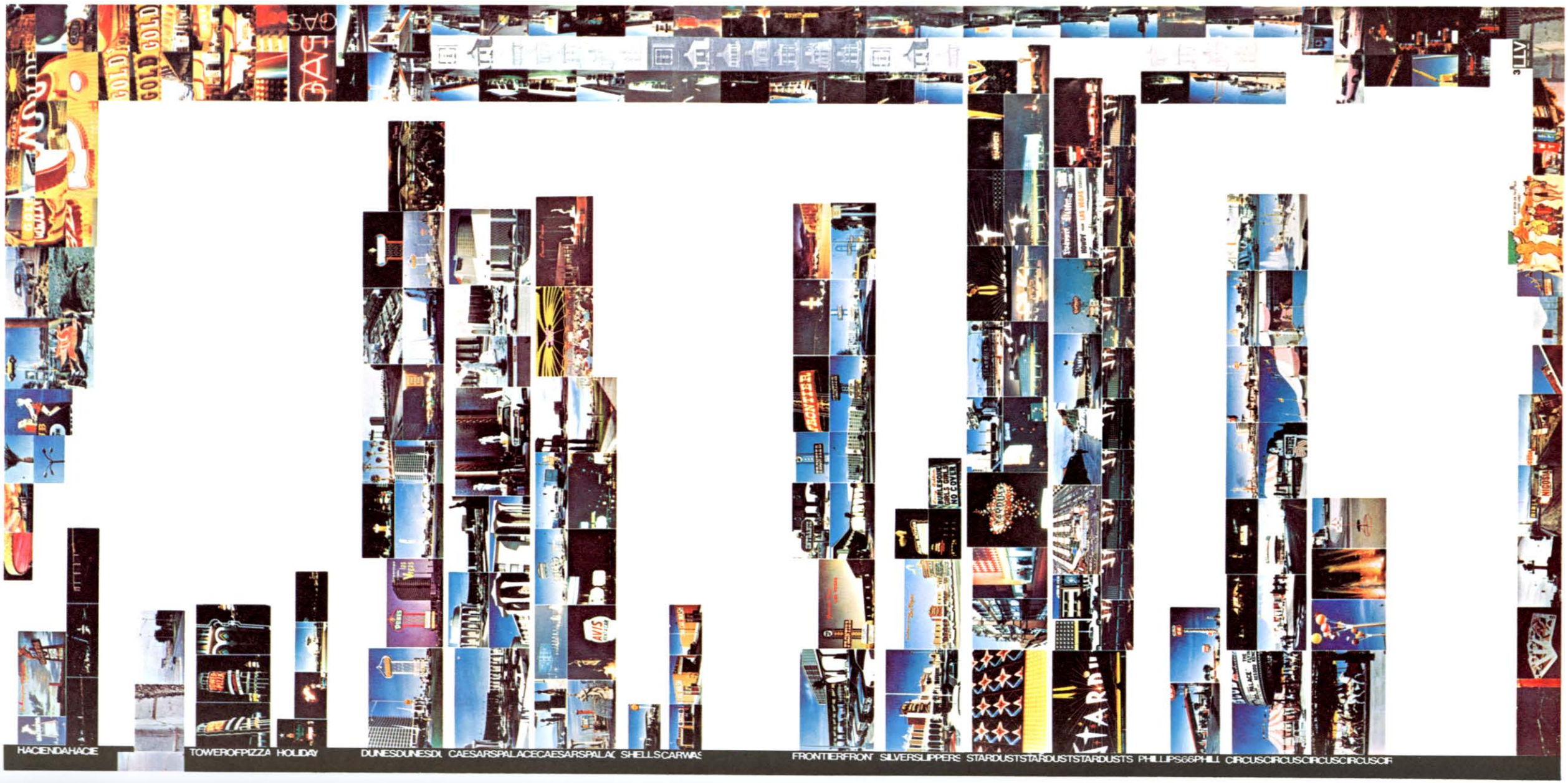
With words and meanings.

The poetry does not matter. [15]

15. T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), p. 13.



233, 234. An image of Las Vegas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TOWEROFPIZZA HOLIDAY
DUNESDUNESDU CAESARSPALACECAESARSPALAC SHELLSCARWAS
FRONTIERFRON SILVERSLIPPERS STARDUSTSTARDUSTSTARDUSTS PHILLIPS66PHILL CIRCUSCIRCUSCIRCUSCIRCUSCIR

PART II

UGLY AND ORDINARY

ARCHITECTURE, OR

THE DECORATED SHED

SOME DEFINITIONS USING THE COMPARATIVE METHOD

"Not innovating willfulness but reverence for the archetype."
Herman Melville

"Incessant new beginnings lead to sterility."
Wallace Stevens

"I like boring things."
Andy Warhol

To make the case for a new but old direction in architecture, we shall use some, perhaps indiscreet, comparisons to show what we are for and what we are against and ultimately to justify our own architecture. When architects talk or write, they philosophize almost solely to justify their own work, and this apologia will be no different. Our argument depends on comparisons, because it is simple to the point of banality. It needs contrast to point it up. We shall use, somewhat undiplomatically, some of the works of leading architects today as contrast and context.

We shall emphasize image — image over process or form — in asserting that architecture depends in its perception and creation on past experience and emotional association and that these symbolic and representational elements may often be contradictory to the form, structure, and program with which they combine in the same building. We shall survey this contradiction in its two main manifestations:

1. Where the architectural systems of space, structure, and program are submerged and distorted by an overall symbolic form. This kind of building-becoming-sculpture we call the duck in honor of the duck-shaped drive-in, "The Long Island Duckling,"[1] illustrated in God's Own Junkyard by Peter Blake.[1]

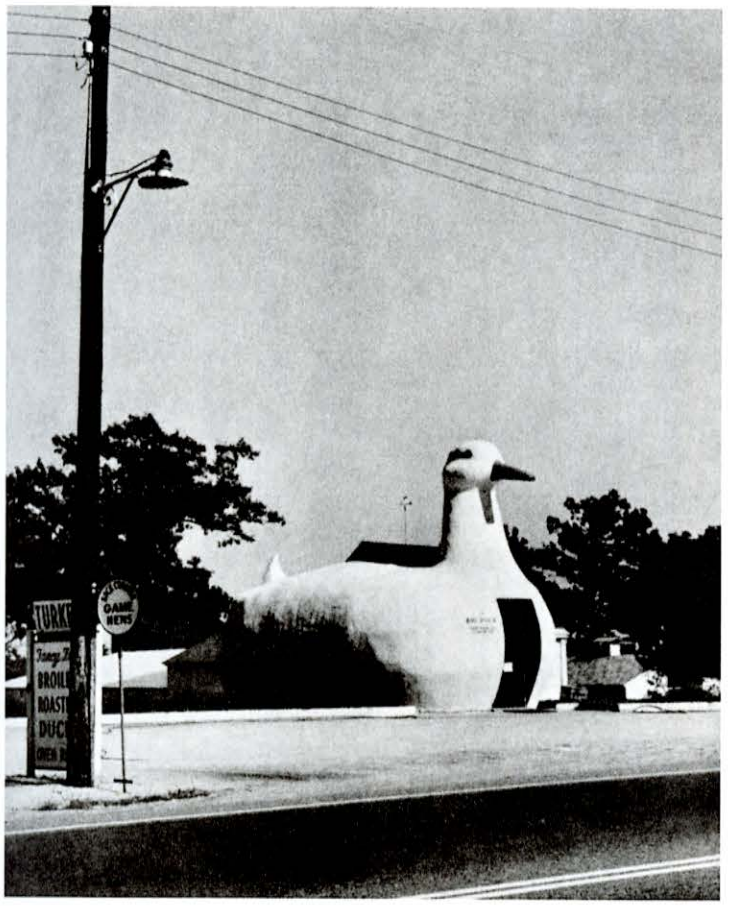
2. Where systems of space and structure are directly at the service of program, and ornament is applied independently of them. This we call the decorated shed.[2]

The duck is the special building that is a symbol; the decorated shed is the conventional shelter that applies symbols.[3, 4] We maintain that both kinds of architecture are valid — Chartres is a duck (although it is a decorated shed as well), and the Palazzo Farnese is a decorated shed — but we think that the duck is seldom relevant today, although it pervades Modern architecture.

We shall describe how we come by the automobile-oriented commercial architecture of urban sprawl as our source for a civic and residential architecture of meaning, viable now, as the turn-of-the-century industrial vocabulary was viable for a Modern architecture of space and industrial technology 40 years ago. We shall show how the iconography, rather than the space and piazzas of historical architecture, forms the background for the study of association and symbolism in commercial art and strip architecture.

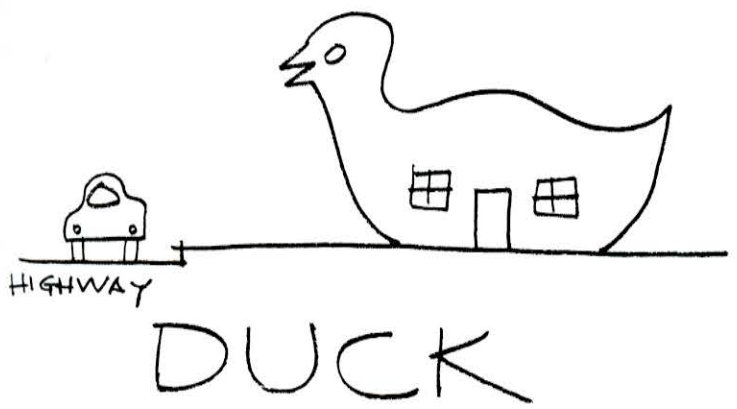
Finally we shall argue for the symbolism of the ugly and ordinary in architecture and for the particular significance of the decorated shed with a rhetorical front and conventional behind: for architecture as shelter with symbols on it.

1. Peter Blake, God's Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 101. See also Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, "On Ducks and Decoration," Architecture Canada (November 1968).

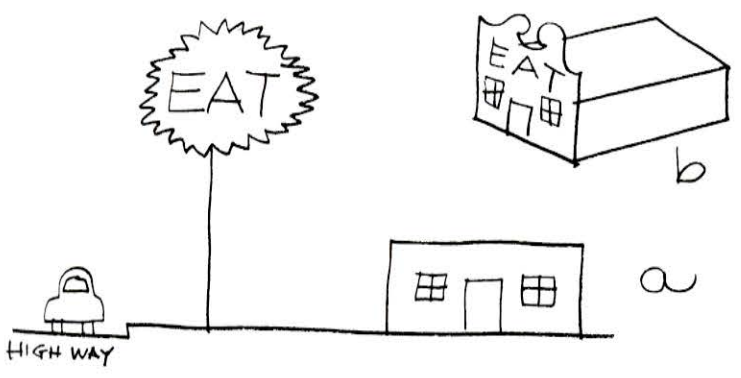


1. "The Long Island Duckling" from God's Own Junkyard

2. Road scene from God's Own Junkyard



3. Duck



4. Decorated shed

The Duck and the Decorated Shed

Let us elaborate on the decorated shed by comparing Paul Rudolph's Crawford Manor[5] with our Guild House[6] (in association with Cope and Lippincott). These two buildings are comparable in use, size, and date of construction: Both are high-rise apartments for the elderly, consisting of about 90 units, built in the mid-1960s. Their settings vary: Guild House, although freestanding, is a six-story, imitation palazzo, analogous in structure and materials to the surrounding buildings and continuing, through its position and form, the street line of the Philadelphia gridiron plan it sits in. Crawford Manor, on the other hand, is unequivocally a soaring tower, unique in its Modern, Ville Radieuse world along New Haven's limited-access, Oak Street Connector.

But it is the contrast in the images of these buildings in relation to their systems of construction that we want to emphasize. The system of construction and program of Guild House are ordinary and conventional and look it; the system of construction and program of Crawford Manor are ordinary and conventional but do not look it.

Let us interject here that we chose Crawford Manor for this comparison not because of any particular antagonism toward that building. It is, in fact, a skillful building by a skillful architect, and we could easily have chosen a much more extreme version of what we are criticizing. But in general we chose it because it can represent establishment architecture now (that is, it represents the great majority of what you see today in any architecture journal), and

in particular because it corresponds in fundamental ways with Guild House. On the other hand, our choosing Guild House for comparison involves a disadvantage, because that building is now five years old, and some of our later work can more explicitly and vividly convey our current ideas. Last, please do not criticize us for primarily analyzing image: We are doing so simply because image is pertinent to our argument, not because we wish to deny an interest in or the importance of process, program, and structure or, indeed, social issues in architecture or in these two buildings. Along with most architects, we probably spend 90 percent of our design time on these other important subjects and less than 10 percent on the questions we are addressing here; they are merely not the direct subject of this inquiry.

To continue our comparisons, the construction of Guild House is poured-in-place concrete plate with curtain walls, pierced by double-hung windows and enclosing the interior space to make rooms. The material is common brick – darker than usual to match the smog-smudged brick of the neighborhood. The mechanical systems of Guild House are nowhere manifest in the outside forms. The typical floor plan contains a 1920s-apartment-house variety of units to accommodate particular needs, views, and exposures; this distorts the efficient grid of columns.[7] The structure of Crawford Manor, which is poured-in-place concrete with concrete block faced with a striated pattern, is likewise a conventional frame supporting laid-up masonry walls.[8]

But it does not look it. It looks more advanced technologically and more progressive spatially. It looks as if its supports are spatial, perhaps mechanical-harboring shafts made of a continuous plastic material reminiscent of béton brut with the striated marks of violently heroic construction process embossed in their form. They articulate the flowing interior space, their structural purity never punctured by holes for windows or distorted by exceptions in the plan. Interior light is "modulated" by the voids between the structure and the "floating" cantilevered balconies.[9]

The architectural elements for supplying exterior light in Guild House are frankly windows. We relied on the conventional method of doing windows in a building, and we by no means thought through from the beginning the subject of exterior light modulation but started where someone else had left off before us.

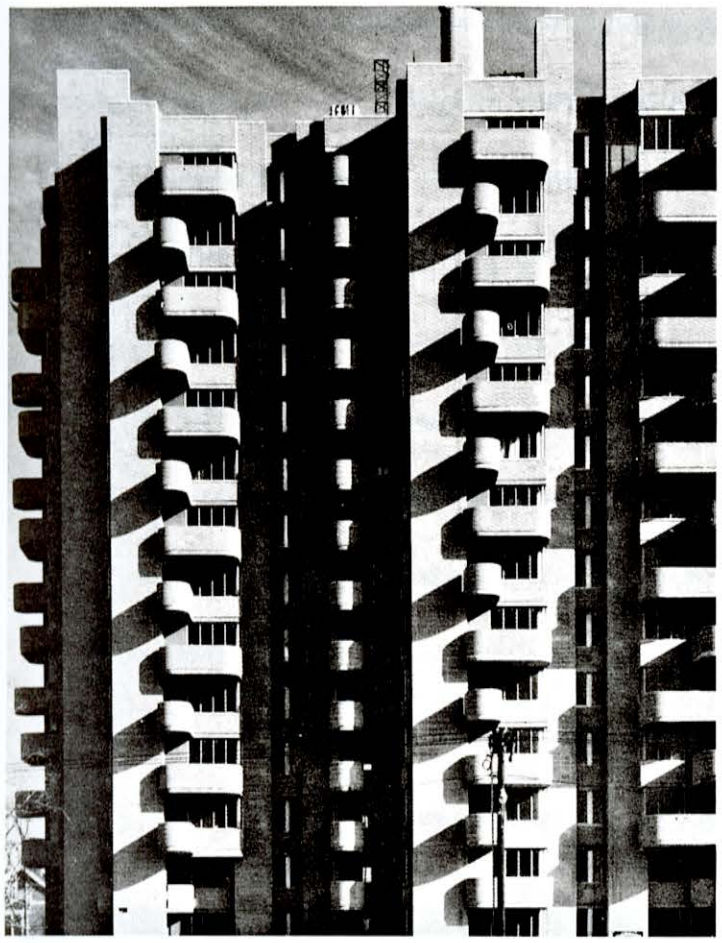
The windows look familiar; they look like, as well as are, windows, and in this respect their use is explicitly symbolic. But like all effective symbolic images, they are intended to look familiar and unfamiliar. They are the conventional element used slightly unconventionally. Like the subject matter of Pop Art, they are commonplace elements made uncommon through distortion in shape (slight), change in scale (they are much bigger than normal double-hung windows), and change in context (double-hung windows in a perhaps high-fashion building).[10]

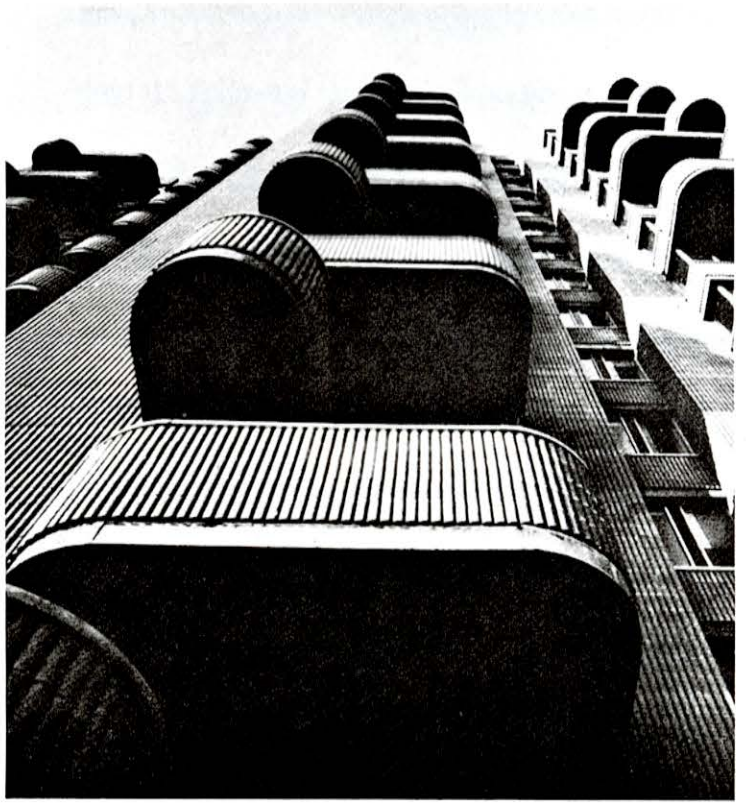
5. Crawford Manor, New Haven, 1962-1966; Paul Rudolph

6. Guild House, Friends' Housing for the Elderly, Philadelphia, 1960-1963; Venturi and Rauch, Cope and Lippincott, Associates

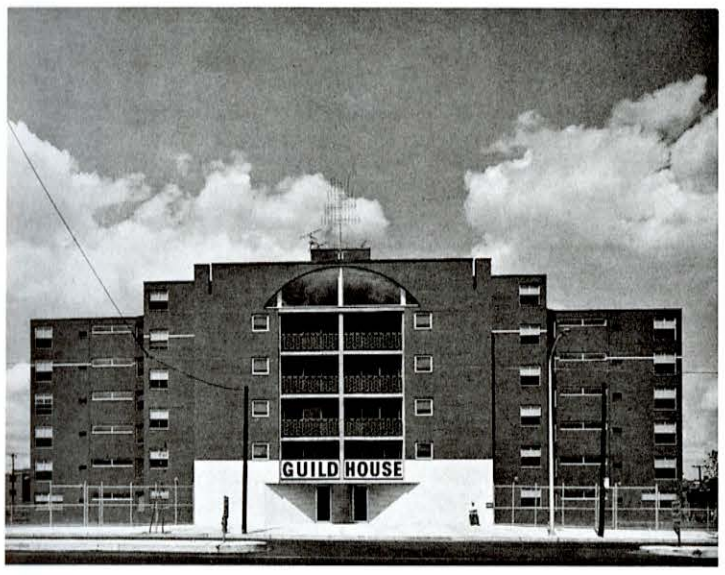
7. Guild House, typical plan

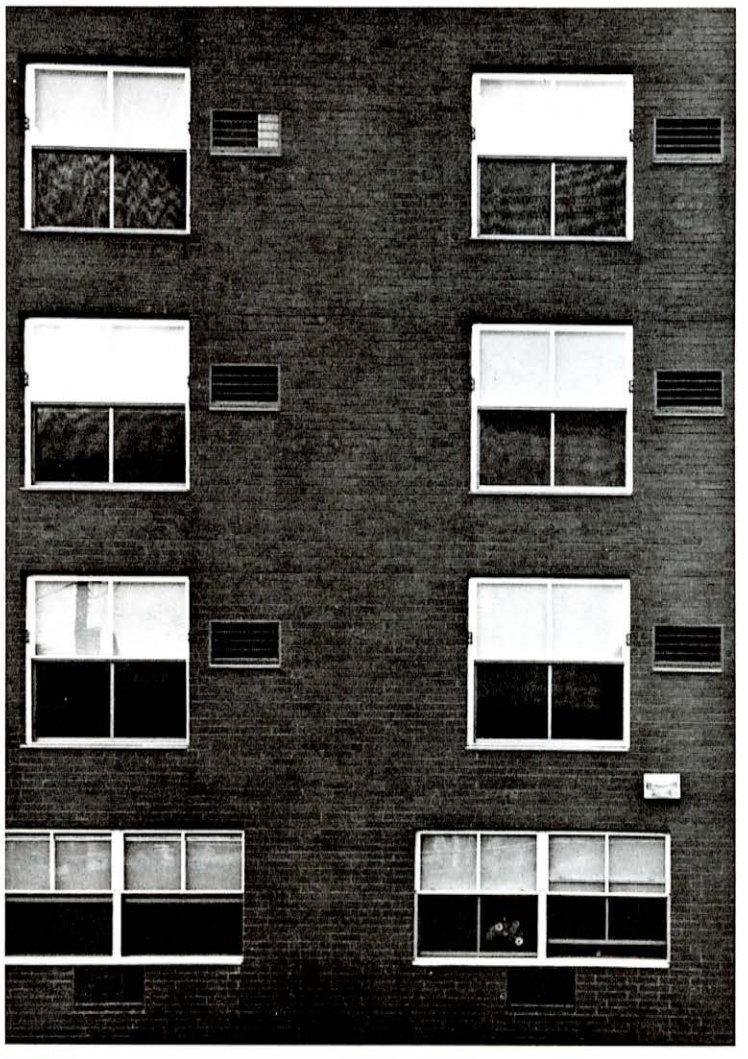
8. Crawford Manor, typical plan



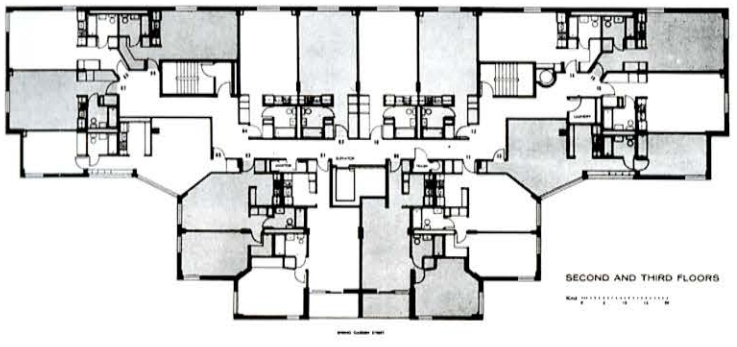


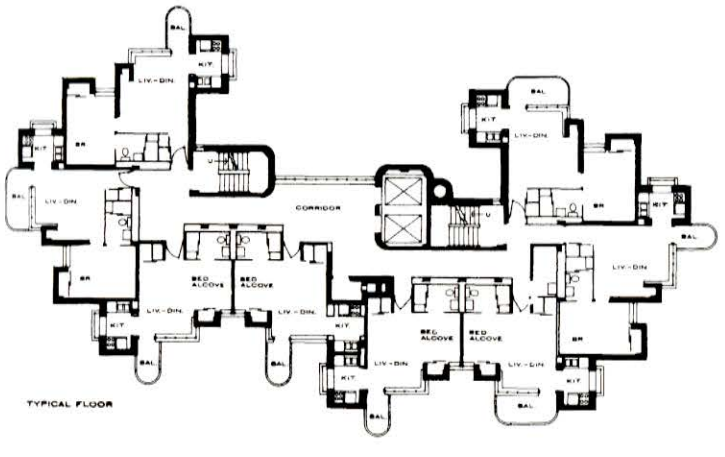
9. Crawford Manor (detail)





10. Guild House, windows





Guild House has ornament on it; Crawford Manor does not.[11] The ornament on Guild House is explicit. It both reinforces and contradicts the form of the building it adorns. And it is to some extent symbolic. The continuous stripe of white-glazed brick high on the facade, in combination with the plane of white-glazed brick below, divides the building into three uneven stories: basement, principal story, and attic. It contradicts the scale of the six real and equal floors on which it is imposed and suggests the proportions of a Renaissance palace. The central white panel also enhances the focus and scale of the entrance. It extends the ground floor to the top of the balcony of the second floor in the way, and for the same reasons, that the increased elaboration and scale around the door of a Renaissance palace or Gothic portal does. The exceptional and fat column in an otherwise flat wall surface increases the focus of the entrance, and the luxurious granite and glazed brick enhance the amenity there, as does the veined marble that developers apply at street level to make their apartment entrances more classy and rentable. At the same time, the column's position in the middle of the entrance diminishes its importance.

The arched window in Guild House is not structural. Unlike the more purely ornamental elements in this building, it reflects an interior function of the shed, that is, the common activities at the top. But the big common room itself is an exception to the system inside. On the front elevation, an arch sits above a central vertical stripe of balcony voids, whose base is the ornamental entrance. Arch, balconies, and base together unify the facade and, like a giant order (or classic jukebox front), undermine the six stories to increase the scale and monumentality of the front. In turn, the giant order is topped by a flourish, an unconnected, symmetrical television antenna in gold anodized aluminum, which is both an imitation of an abstract Lippold sculpture and a symbol for the elderly. An open-armed, polychromatic, plaster madonna in this position would have been more imageful but unsuitable for a Quaker institution that eschews all outward symbols – as do Crawford Manor and most orthodox Modern architecture that reject ornament and association in the perception of forms.

11. Guild House, central panel

Explicit and Implicit Associations

Adornments of representational sculpture on the roof, or a prettily shaped window, or wittiness or rhetoric of any kind are unthinkable for Crawford Manor. Nor would it sport appliqués of expensive material on a column or white stripes and wainscoting copied from Renaissance compositions. For instance, Crawford Manor's cantilevered balconies are "structurally integrated"; they are parapeted with the overall structural material and devoid of ornament. Balconies at Guild House are not structural exercises, and the railings are adornments as well as recollections at a bigger scale of conventional patterns in stamped metal.[12]

Guild House symbolism involves ornament and is more or less dependent on explicit associations; it looks like what it is not only because of what it is but also because of what it reminds you of. But the architectural elements of Crawford Manor abound in associations of another less explicit kind. Implicit in the pure architectural forms of Crawford Manor is a symbolism different from the appliqué ornament of Guild House with its explicit, almost heraldic, associations. The implicit symbolism of Crawford Manor we read into the undecorated physiognomy of the building through associations and past experience; it provides layers of meaning beyond the "abstract expressionist" messages derived from the inherent physiognomic characteristics of the forms -- their size, texture, color, and so forth. These meanings come from our knowledge of technology, from the work and writings of the Modern form givers, from the vocabulary of industrial architecture, and from other sources. For instance, the vertical shafts of Crawford Manor connote structural piers (they are not structural), made of rusticated "reinforced concrete" (with mortar joints), harboring servant spaces and mechanical systems (actually kitchens), terminating in the silhouettes of exhaust systems (suitable to industrial laboratories), articulating light-modulating voids (instead of framing windows), articulating flowing space (confined to efficiency apartments but augmented by very ubiquitous balconies that themselves suggest apartment dwelling), and articulating program functions that protrude sensitively (or expressionistically) from the edges of the plan.

12. Guild House, balcony

Heroic and Original, or Ugly and Ordinary

The content of Crawford Manor's implicit symbolism is what we call "heroic and original." Although the substance is conventional and ordinary, the image is heroic and original. The content of the explicit symbolism of Guild House is what we call "ugly and ordinary." The technologically unadvanced brick, the old-fashioned, double-hung windows, the pretty materials around the entrance, and the ugly antenna not hidden behind the parapet in the accepted fashion, all are distinctly conventional in image as well as substance or, rather, ugly and ordinary. (The inevitable plastic flowers at home in these windows are, rather, pretty and ordinary; they do not make this architecture look silly as they would, we think, the heroic and original windows of Crawford Manor.[13])

But in Guild House, the symbolism of the ordinary goes further than this. The pretensions of the "giant order" on the front, the symmetrical, palazzolike composition with its three monumental stories (as well as its six real stories), topped by a piece of sculpture — or almost sculpture — suggest something of the heroic and original. It is true that in this case the heroic and original facade is somewhat ironical, but it is this juxtaposition of contrasting symbols — the appliqué of one order of symbols on another — that constitutes for us the decorated shed. This is what makes Guild House an architect's decorated shed — not architecture without architects.

The purest decorated shed would be some form of conventional systems-building shelter that corresponds closely to the space, structure, and program requirements of the architecture, and upon which is laid a contrasting — and if in the nature of the circumstances, contradictory — decoration. In Guild House the ornamental-symbolic elements are more or less literally appliqué: The planes and stripes of white brick are appliqué; the street facade through its disengagement at the top corners implies its separation from the bulk of the shed at the front. (This quality also implies continuity, and therefore unity, with the street line of facades of the other older, nonfree-standing buildings on each side.) The symbolism of the decoration happens to be ugly and ordinary with a dash of ironic heroic and original, and the shed is straight ugly and ordinary, though in its brick and windows it is symbolic too. Although there is ample historical precedent for the decorated shed, present-day roadside commercial architecture — the $10,000 stand with the $100,000 sign — was the immediate prototype of our decorated shed. And it is in the sign of Guild House that the purest manifestation of the decorated shed and the most vivid contrast with Crawford Manor lies.

13. Guild House, detail of window

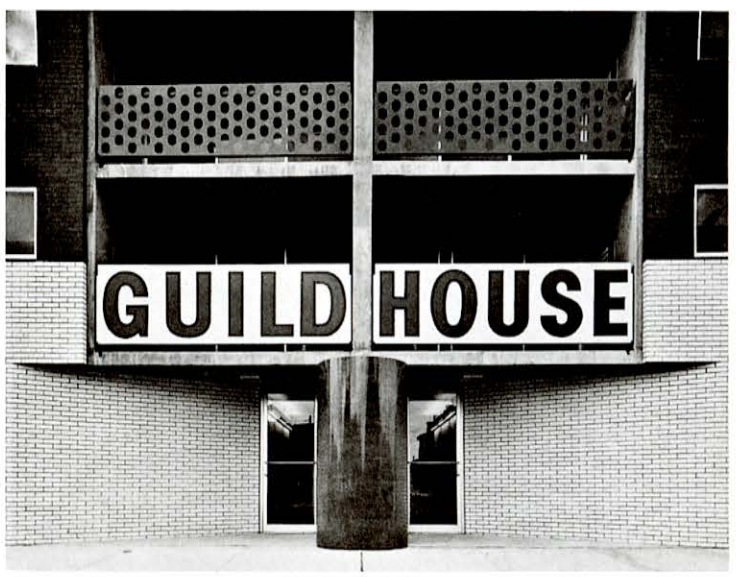
Ornament: Signs and Symbols, Denotation and Connotation, Heraldry and Physiognomy, Meaning and Expression

A sign on a building carries a denotative meaning in the explicit message of its letters and words. It contrasts with the connotative expression of the other, more architectural elements of the building. A big sign, like that over the entrance of Guild House, big enough to be read from passing cars on Spring Garden Street, is particularly ugly and ordinary in its explicit commercial associations.[14] It is significant that the sign for Crawford Manor is modest, tasteful, and not commercial. It is too small to be seen from fast-moving cars on the Oak Street Connector. But signs as explicit symbols, especially big, commercial-looking signs, are anathema in architecture such as Crawford Manor. Its identification comes, not through explicit, denotative communication, through literally spelling out "I am Guild House," but through the connotation implicit in the physiognomy of its pure architectural form, which is intended to express in some way housing for the elderly.

We have borrowed the simple literary distinctions between "denotative" and "connotative" meanings and applied them to the heraldic and physiognomic element in architecture. To clarify further, the sign saying GUILD HOUSE denotes meaning through its words; as such, it is the heraldic element par excellence. The character of the graphics, however, connotes institutional dignity, while contradictorily, the size of the graphics connotes commercialism. The position of the sign perhaps also connotes entering. The white-glazed brick denotes decoration as a unique and rich appliqué on the normal red brick. Through the location of the white areas and stripes on the facade, we have tried connotatively to suggest floor levels associated with palaces and thereby palacelike scale and monumentality. The double-hung windows denote their function, but their grouping connotes domesticity and ordinary meanings.

Denotation indicates specific meaning; connotation suggests general meanings. The same element can have both denotative and connotative meanings, and these may be mutually contradictory. Generally, to the extent that it is denotative in its meaning, an element depends on its heraldic characteristics; to the extent that it is connotative, an element depends on its physiognomic qualities. Modern architecture, and Crawford Manor as its exemplar, has tended to shun the heraldic and denotative in architecture and to exaggerate the physiognomic and connotative. Modern architecture uses expressive ornament and shuns (explicit) symbolic ornament.

In sum, we have analyzed Guild House and Crawford Manor in terms of content of the image and in terms of method used to achieve image. A comparative catalog of Guild House versus Crawford Manor in these terms is shown in Table 1.



14. Guild House, sign

Table 1 Comparison of Guild House and Crawford Manor

Guild House	Crawford Manor
An architecture of meaning	An architecture of expression
Explicit "denotative" symbolism	Implicit "connotative" symbolism
Symbolic ornament	Expressive ornament
Applied ornament	Integral expressionism
Mixed media	Pure architecture
Decoration by the attaching of superficial elements	Unadmitted decoration by the articulation of integral elements
Symbolism	Abstraction
Representational art	"Abstract expressionism"
Evocative architecture	Innovative architecture
Societal messages	Architectural content
Propaganda	Architectural articulation
High and low art	High art
Evolutionary, using historical precedent	Revolutionary, progressive antitraditional
Conventional	Creative, unique, and original
Old words with new meanings	New words
Ordinary	Extraordinary
Expedient	Heroic
Pretty in front	Pretty (or at least unified) all around
Inconsistent	Consistent
Conventional technology	Advanced technology
Tendency toward urban sprawl	Tendency toward mega-structure
Starts from client's value system	Tries to elevate client's value system and/or budget by reference to Art and Metaphysics
Looks cheap	Looks expensive
"Boring"	"Interesting"

Is Boring Architecture Interesting?

For all its commonness, is Guild House boring? For all its dramatic balconies, is Crawford Manor interesting? Is it not, perhaps, the other way around? Our criticism of Crawford Manor and the buildings it stands for is not moralistic, nor is it concerned with so-called honesty in architecture or a lack of correspondence between substance and image per se; Crawford Manor is ugly and ordinary while looking heroic and original. We criticize Crawford Manor, not for "dishonesty," but for irrelevance today. We shall try to show how, in both the method and content of its images, Crawford Manor, as well as the architecture it represents, has impoverished itself by rejecting denotative ornament and the rich tradition of iconography in historical architecture and by ignoring — or rather using unawares — the connotative expression it substituted for decoration. When it cast out eclecticism, Modern architecture submerged symbolism. Instead it promoted expressionism, concentrating on the expression of architectural elements themselves: on the expression of structure and function. It suggested, through the image of the building, reformist-progressive social and industrial aims that it could seldom achieve in reality. By limiting itself to strident articulations of the pure architectural elements of space, structure, and program, Modern architecture's expression has become a dry expressionism, empty and boring — and in the end, irresponsible. Ironically, the Modern architecture of today, while rejecting explicit symbolism and frivolous appliqué ornament, has distorted the whole building into one big ornament. In substituting "articulation" for decoration, it has become a duck.

HISTORICAL AND OTHER PRECEDENTS: TOWARDS AN OLD ARCHITECTURE

Historical Symbolism and Modern Architecture

The forms of Modern architecture have been created by architects and analyzed by critics largely in terms of their perceptual qualities and at the expense of their symbolic meanings derived from association. To the extent that the Moderns recognize the systems of symbols that pervade our environment, they often refer to the debasement of our symbols. Although largely forgotten by Modern architects, the historical precedent for symbolism in architecture exists, and the complexities of iconography have continued to be a major part of the discipline of art history. Early Modern architects scorned recollection in architecture. They rejected eclecticism and style as elements of architecture as well as any historicism that minimized the revolutionary over the evolutionary character of their almost exclusively technology-based architecture. A second generation of Modern architects acknowledged only the "constituent facts" of history, as extracted by Sigfried Giedion,[2] who abstracted the historical building and its piazza as pure form and space in light. These architects' preoccupation with space as the architectural quality caused them to read the buildings as forms, the piazzas as space, and the graphics and sculpture as color, texture, and scale. The ensemble became an abstract expression in architecture in the decade of abstract expressionism in painting. The iconographic forms and trappings of medieval and Renaissance architecture were reduced to polychromatic texture at the service of space; the symbolic complexities and contradictions of Mannerist architecture were appreciated for their formal complexities and contradictions; neo-Classical architecture was liked, not for its Romantic use of association, but for its formal simplicity. Architects liked the backs of nineteenth century railroad stations — literally the sheds — and tolerated the fronts as irrelevant, if amusing, aberrations of historical eclecticism. The well-developed symbol systems by the commercial artists of Madison Avenue that constitute the symbolic ambience of urban sprawl, they did not acknowledge.

In the 1950s and 1960s, these "Abstract Expressionists" of Modern architecture acknowledged one dimension of the hill town-piazza complex: its "pedestrian scale" and the "urban life" engendered by its architecture. This view of medieval urbanism encouraged the megastructural (or megasculptural?) fantasies — in this context hill towns with technological trimmings — and reinforced the anti-automobile bias of the Modern architect. But the competition of signs and symbols in the medieval city at various levels of perception and meaning in both building and piazza was lost on the space-oriented architect. Perhaps the symbols, besides being foreign in content, were at a scale and a degree of complexity too subtle for today's bruised sensibilities and impatient pace. This explains, perhaps, the ironical fact that the return to iconography for some of us architects of that generation was via the sensibilities of the Pop artists of the early 1960s and via the duck and the decorated shed on Route 66: from Rome to Las Vegas, but also back again from Las Vegas to Rome.

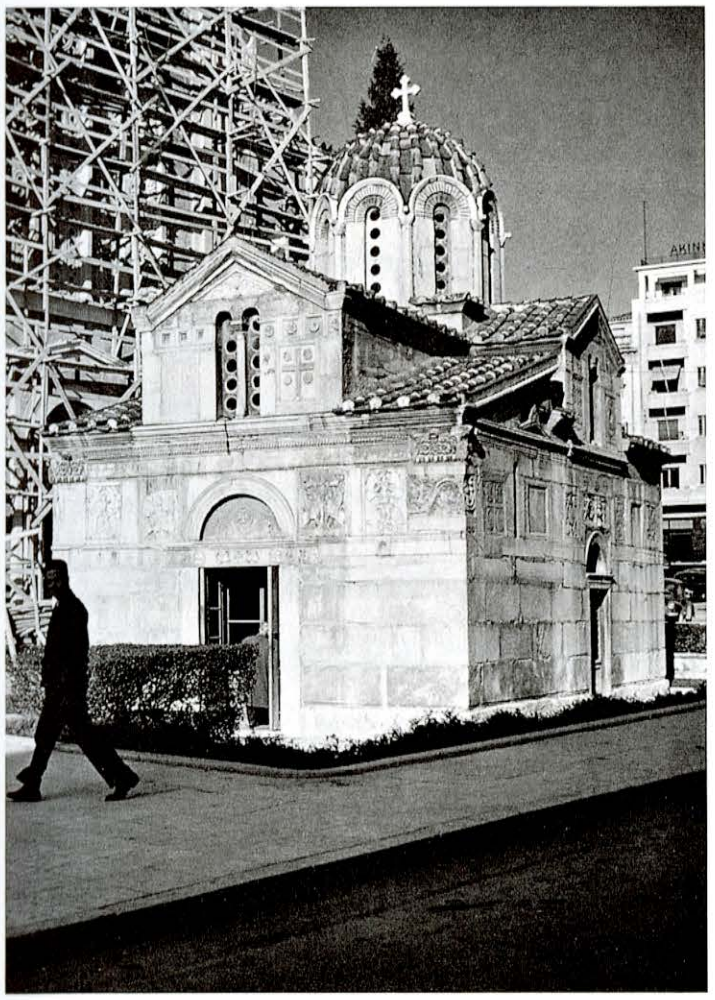
2. Sigfried Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1944), Part I.

The Cathedral as Duck and Shed

In iconographic terms, the cathedral is a decorated shed and a duck. The late Byzantine Metropole Cathedral in Athens is absurd as a piece of architecture.[15] It is "out of scale": Its small size does not correspond to its complex form – that is, if form must be determined primarily by structure – because the space that the square room encloses could be spanned without the interior supports and the complex roof configuration of dome, drum, and vaults. However, it is not absurd as a duck – as a domed, Greek cross, evolved structurally from large buildings in greater cities, but developed symbolically here to mean cathedral. And this duck is itself decorated with an appliqué collage of objets trouvés – bas-reliefs in masonry – more or less explicitly symbolic in content.

Amiens is a billboard with a building behind it.[16] Gothic cathedrals have been considered weak in that they did not achieve an "organic unity" between front and side. But this disjunction is a natural reflection of an inherent contradiction in a complex building that, toward the cathedral square, is a relatively two-dimensional screen for propaganda and, in back, is a masonry systems building. This is the reflection of a contradiction between image and function that the decorated shed often accommodates. (The shed behind is also a duck because its shape is that of a cross.)

The facades of the great cathedrals of the Ile de France are two-dimensional planes at the scale of the whole; they were to evolve at the top corners into towers to connect with the surrounding countryside. But in detail these facades are buildings in themselves, simulating an architecture of space in the strongly three-dimensional relief of their sculpture. The niches for statues – as Sir John Summerson has pointed out – are yet another level of architecture within architecture. But the impact of the facade comes from the immensely complex meaning derived from the symbolism and explicit associations of the aedicules and their statues and from their relative positions and sizes in the hierarchic order of the kingdom of heaven on the facades. In this orchestration of messages, connotation as practiced by Modern architects is scarcely important. The shape of the facade, in fact, disguises the silhouette of nave and aisles behind, and the doors and the rose windows are the barest reflections of the architectural complex inside.



15. Metropole Cathedral, Athens

16. Amiens Cathedral, west front

Symbolic Evolution in Las Vegas

Just as the architectural evolution of a typical Gothic cathedral may be traced over the decades through stylistic and symbolic changes, a similar evolution — rare in contemporary architecture — may also be followed in the commercial architecture of Las Vegas. However, in Las Vegas, this evolution is compressed into years rather than decades, reflecting the quicker tempo of our times, if not the less eternal message of commercial rather than religious propaganda. Evolution in Las Vegas is consistently toward more and bigger symbolism. The Golden Nugget casino on Fremont Street was an orthodox decorated shed with big signs in the 1950s — essentially Main Street commercial, ugly and ordinary.[17] However, by the 1960s it was all sign; there was hardly any building visible.[18] The quality of the "electrographics" was made more strident to match the crasser scale and more distracting context of the new decade and to keep up with the competition next door. The freestanding signs on the Strip, like the towers at San Gimignano, get bigger as well. They grow either through sequential replacements, as at the Flamingo, the Desert Inn, and the Tropicana, or through enlargement as with the Caesars Palace sign, where a freestanding, pedimented temple facade was extended laterally by one column with a statue on top — a feat never attempted, a problem never solved in the whole evolution of Classical architecture.[19]

17. Golden Nugget, Las Vegas, pre-1964

18. Golden Nugget, Las Vegas, post-1964

19. Caesars Palace, extended sign, Las Vegas

The Renaissance and the Decorated Shed

The iconography of Renaissance architecture is less overtly propagandistic than is that of medieval or Strip architecture, although its ornament, literally based on the Roman, Classical vocabulary, was to be an instrument for the rebirth of classical civilization. However, since most of this ornament depicts structure — it is ornament symbolic of structure — it is less independent of the shed it is attached to than ornament on medieval and Strip architecture.[20] The image of the structure and space reinforces rather than contradicts the substance of the structure and space. Pilasters represent modular sinews on the surface of the wall; quoins represent reinforcement at the ends of the wall; vertical moldings, protection at the edges of the wall; rustication, support at the bottom of the wall; drip cornices, protection from rain on the wall; horizontal moldings, the progressive stages in the depth of the wall; and a combination of many of these ornaments at the edge of a door symbolizes the importance of the door in the face of the wall. Although some of these elements are functional as well — for instance, the drips are, but the pilasters are not — all are explicitly symbolic, associating the glories of Rome with the refinements of building.

But Renaissance iconography is not all structural. The stemma above the door is a sign. The Baroque facades of Francesco Borromini, for instance, are rich with symbolism in bas relief — religious, dynastic, and other. It is significant that Giedion, in his brilliant analysis of the facade of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, described the contrapuntal layerings, undulating rhythms, and subtle scales of the forms and surfaces as abstract elements in a

composition in relation to the outside space of the street but without reference to the complex layering of symbolic meanings they contain.

The Italian palace is the decorated shed par excellence. For two centuries, from Florence to Rome, the plan of rooms en suite around a rectangular, arcaded cortile with an entrance penetration in the middle of a facade and a three-story elevation with occasional mezzanines was a constant base for a series of stylistic and compositional variations. The architectural scaffolding was the same for the Strozzi Palace with its three stories of diminishing rustication, for the Rucellai with its quasi-frame of three-ordered pilasters, for the Farnese with its quoined corners complementing the focus of the ornamental central bay and its resultant horizontal hierarchy, and for the Odescalchi with its monumental giant order imposing the image of one dominant story on three. The basis for the significant evaluation of the development of Italian civic architecture from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth century lies in the decoration of a shed. Similar ornament adorns subsequent palazzi, commercial and senza cortili. The Carson Pirie Scott department store supports at the ground floor a cast-iron cladding of biological patterns in low relief with intricate scale appropriate for sustaining the customers' interest at eye level, while abruptly opposing, in the formal vocabulary above it, the ugly and ordinary symbolism of a conventional loft. The conventional shed of a high-rise Howard Johnson motel is more Ville Radieuse slab than palazzo, but the explicit symbolism of its virtually predimented doorway, a rigid frame in heraldic orange enamel, matches the Classical pediment with feudal crest over the entrance of a patrician palazzo, if we grant the change in scale and the jump in context from urban piazza to pop sprawl.

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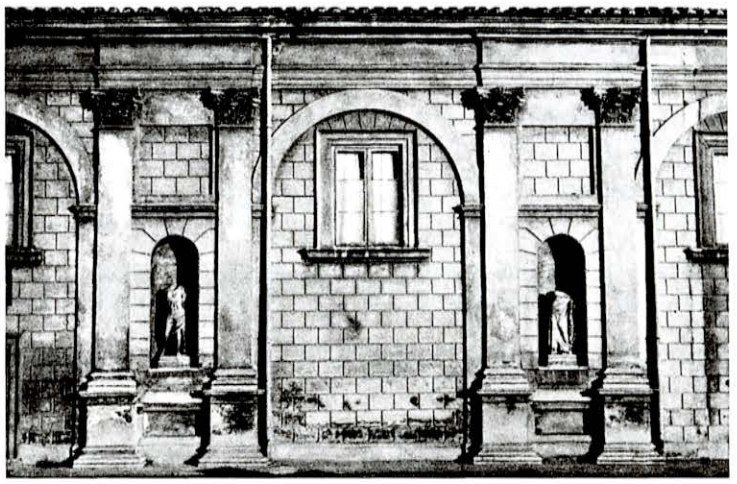
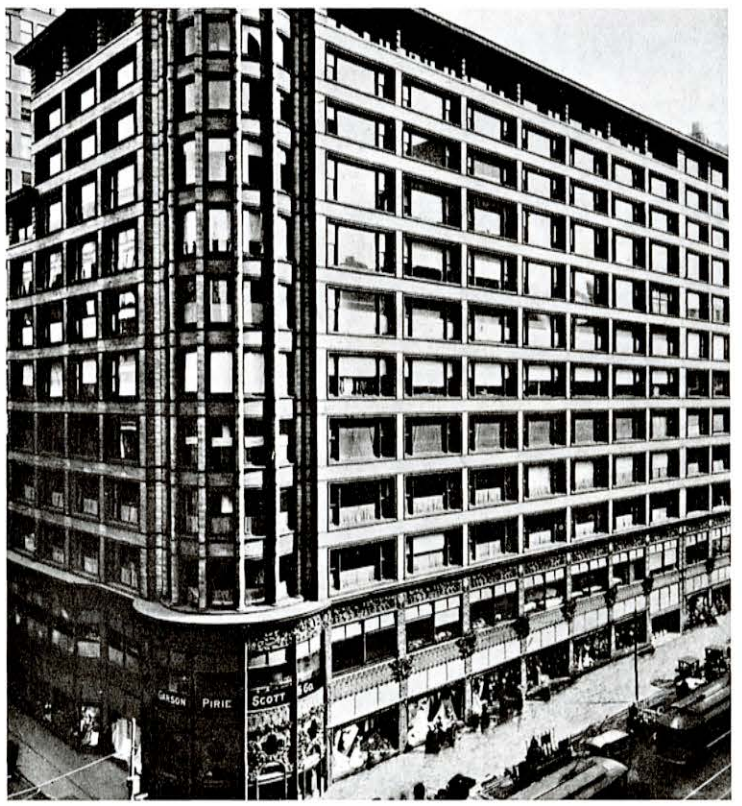
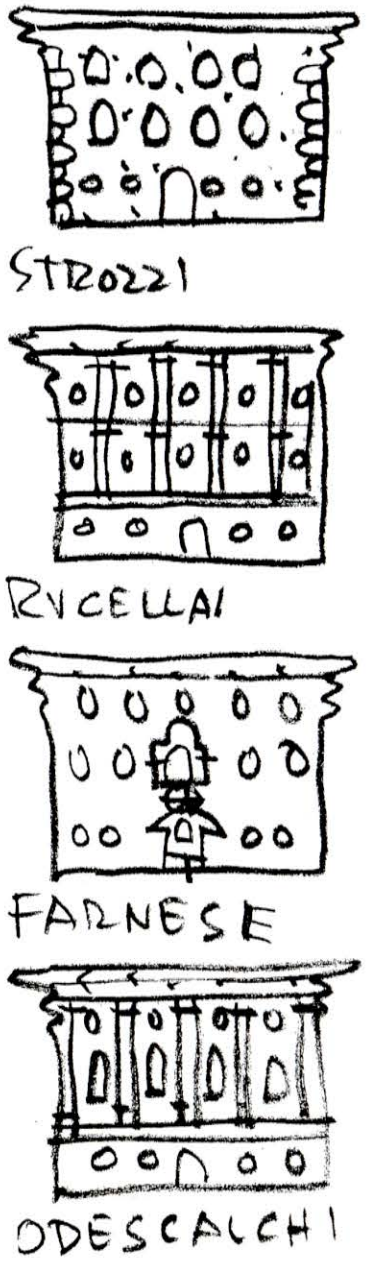
20. Belvedere Court, Vatican



23. Carson Pirie Scott department store, Chicago
24. Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge and Restaurant, Charlottesville, Virginia



21, 22. Palazzo facades



Nineteenth-Century Eclecticism

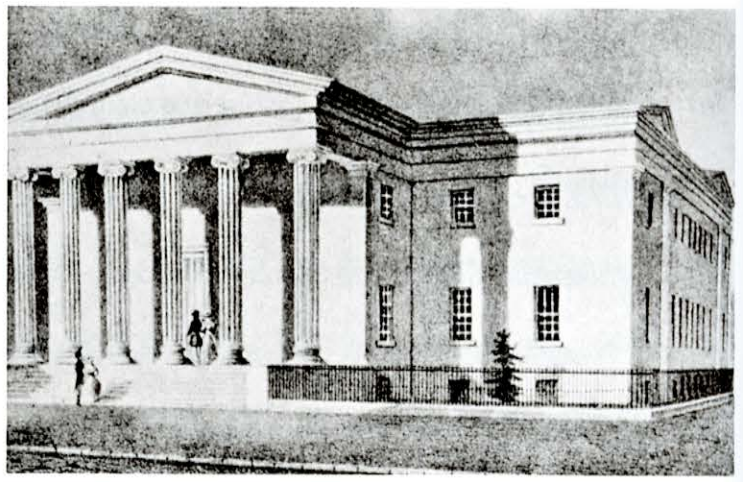
The stylistic eclecticism of the nineteenth century was essentially a symbolism of function, although sometimes a symbolism of nationalism — Henri IV Renaissance in France, Tudor in England, for example. But quite consistently styles correspond to building types. Banks were Classical basilicas to suggest civic responsibility and tradition; commercial buildings looked like burghers' houses; universities copied Gothic rather than Classical colleges at Oxford and Cambridge to make symbols of "embattled learning," as George Howe put it, "tending the torch of humanism through the dark ages of economic determinism,"[3] and a choice between Perpendicular and Decorated for midcentury English churches reflected theological differences between the Oxford and Cambridge Movements. The hamburger-shaped hamburger stand is a current, more literal, attempt to express function via association but for commercial persuasion rather than theological refinement. **25-27**

Donald Drew Egbert,[4] in an analysis of midcentury submissions for the Prix de Rome at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts — home of the bad guys — called functionalism via association a symbolic manifestation of functionalism that preceded the substantive functionalism that was a basis for the Modern movement: Image preceded substance. Egbert also discussed the balance in the new nineteenth-century building types between expression of function via physiognomy and expression of function via style. For instance, the railroad station was recognizable by its cast-iron shed and big clock. These physiognomic symbols contrasted with the explicit heraldic signing of the Renaissance-eclectic waiting and station spaces up front. Sigfried Giedion called this artful contrast within the same building a gross contradiction — a nineteenth-century "split in feeling" — because he saw architecture as technology and space, excluding the element of symbolic meaning.

25. Eclectic bank

26. Eclectic church

27. Hamburger stand, Dallas, Texas



3. George Howe, "Some Experiences and Observations of an Elderly Architect," Perspecta 2, The Yale Architectural Journal, New Haven (1954), p. 4.

4. Donald Drew Egbert, "Lectures in Modern Architecture" (unpublished), Princeton University, c. 1945.

Modern Ornament

Modern architects began to make the back the front, symbolizing the configurations of the shed to create a vocabulary for their architecture but denying in theory what they were doing in practice. They said one thing and did another. Less may have been more, but the I-section on Mies van der Rohe's fire-resistant columns, for instance, is as complexly ornamental as the applied pilaster on the Renaissance pier or the incised shaft in the Gothic pier. (In fact, less was more work.) Acknowledged or not, Modern ornament has seldom been symbolic of anything nonarchitectural since the Bauhaus vanquished Art Deco and the decorative arts. More specifically, its content is consistently spatial and technological. Like the Renaissance vocabulary of the Classical orders, Mies's structural ornament, although specifically contradictory to the structure it adorns, reinforces the architectural content of the building as a whole. If the Classical orders symbolized "rebirth of the Golden Age of Rome," modern I-beams represent "honest expression of modern technology as space" — or something like that. Note, however, it was "modern" technology of the Industrial Revolution that was symbolized by Mies, and this technology, not current electronic technology, is still the source for Modern architectural symbolism today.

that period are less symbolic than the later exterior pilasters, although the lush veneering of the marble and its reputation for rarity connote richness. Although these "floating" panels can now almost be mistaken for abstract expressionist easel paintings of the 1950s, their purpose was to articulate Flowing Space by directing it within a linear steel frame. Ornament is the servant of Space.

The Kolbe sculpture in this pavilion may have certain symbolic associations, but it too is there primarily to punctuate and direct space; it points up through contrast the machine aesthetic forms around it. A later generation of Modern architects has made these configurations of directional panels and punctuating sculpture the accepted technique for exhibition and museum display, giving the display elements an informational as well as a space-directing role. Mies's elements were symbolic rather than informational; they contrasted the natural with the machined, demonstrating what Modern architecture was by setting it against what it was not. Neither Mies nor his followers used the forms symbolically to convey other-than-architectural meaning. Social realism in a Mies pavilion would be as unthinkable as a WPA mural in the Petit Trianon.

Ornament and Interior Space

Mies's I-section appliqués represent naked steel-frame construction, and they make the necessarily bulky, enclosed, fire-resistant frame underneath look thinner through their complex articulations. The ornamental marble of Mies's interiors is spatial rather than symbolic, and the marble and marblelike panels in the Barcelona Pavilion, the House with Three Courts, and other buildings of

In the Renaissance interior too, ornament is used along with plenty of light to direct and punctuate space. But here, as opposed to Mies, it is the constructional elements that are ornamental — the frames, moldings, pilasters, and architraves that reinforce the forms and identify enclosed space — while the surfaces are the neutral context. Inside the Casino Pio V, however,

pilasters, niches, architraves, and cornices obscure the nature of the space or, rather, make the distinction between wall and vault ambiguous, because these elements, traditionally identified with walls, extend over the vault's surface.

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In the chapel of the Martorama in Sicily there is no question of architectural clarification or of Mannerist ambiguity. Instead, representation smothers space, its patterns camouflaging the forms it adorns. The ornamental patterns are almost independent of, and at times contradictory to, walls, piers, soffits, vaults, and dome. These forms are rounded at their edges to accommodate continuous mosaic surfaces, and the gold mosaic background further softens the geometry, while in the obscure light that occasionally highlights significant symbols, space disintegrates into an amorphous glow. The gilded rocaille in the Amalienburg pavilion does the same

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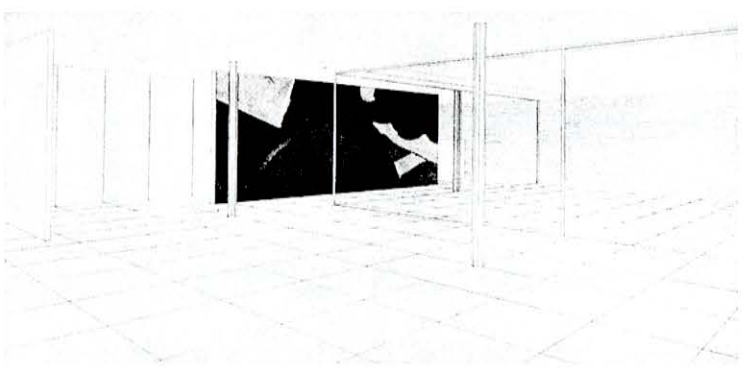
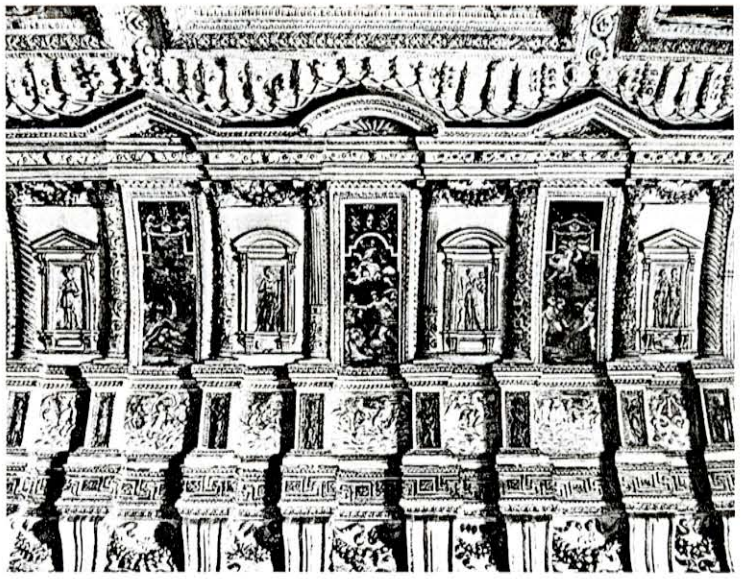
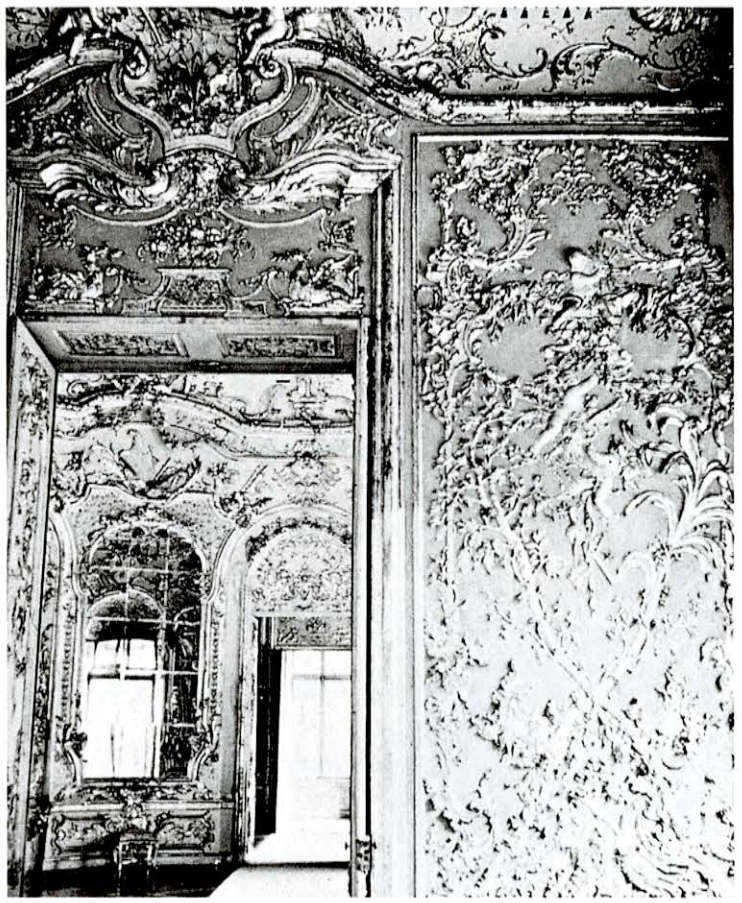
thing with bas-relief. Motival bas-relief, splattered like spinach over walls and furniture, hardware and sconces; reflected by mirrors and crystal fixtures; enchanced by generous light yet obscured by indeterminate curves in plan and section, disintegrates space into an amorphous glitter. Significantly, the Rococo ornament is hardly symbolic and not at all propagandistic. It obscures space, but the ornament is still architectural; in the Byzantine church, propagandistic symbolism overwhelms architecture.







29. Casino Pio V, Rome

30. Martorama, Palermo

31. Amalienburg Pavilion, Nymphenburg

32. Fremont Street, Las Vegas

28. House with Three Courts; perspective of bedroom wing; Mies van der Rohe

The Las Vegas Strip

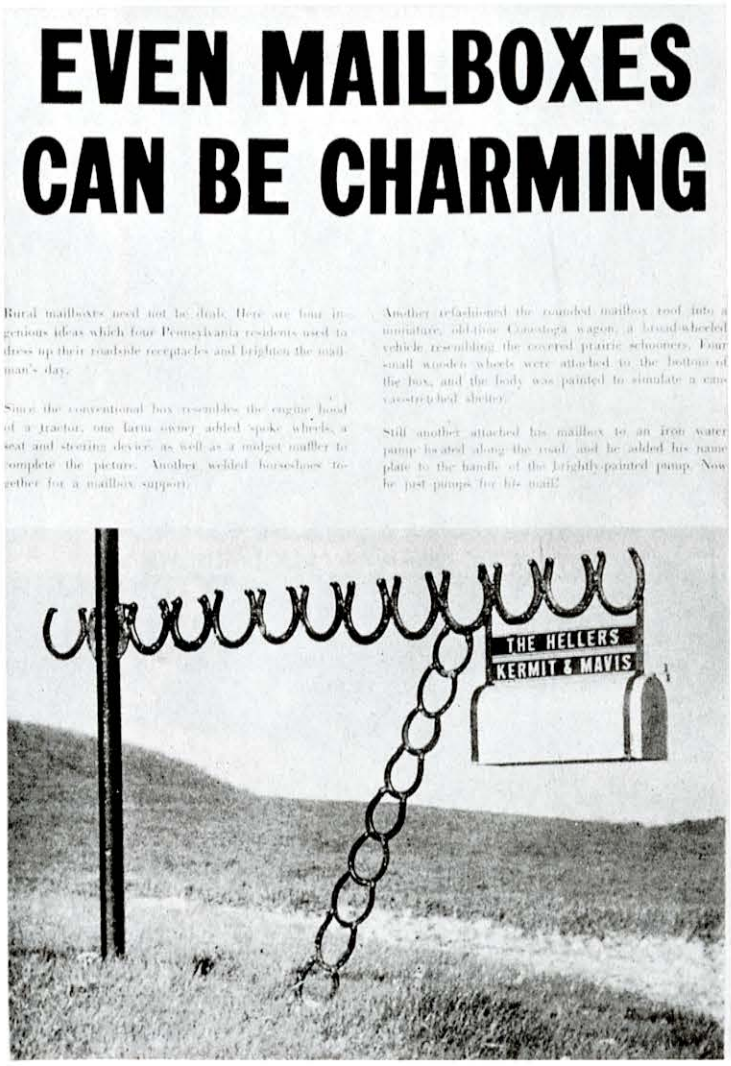
The Las Vegas Strip at night, like the Martorama interior, is symbolic images in dark, amorphous space; but, like the Amalienburg, it glitters rather than glows.[32] Any sense of enclosure or direction comes from lighted signs rather than forms reflected in light.[33] The source of light in the Strip is direct; the signs themselves are the source. They do not reflect light from external, sometimes hidden, sources as is the case with most billboards and Modern architecture. The mechanical movement of neon lights is quicker than mosaic glitter, which depends on the passage of the sun and the pace of the observer; and the intensity of light on the Strip as well as the tempo of its movement is greater to accomodate the greater spaces, greater speeds, and greater impacts that our technology permits and our sensibilities respond to. Also, the tempo of our economy encourages that changeable and disposable environmental decoration known as advertising art. The messages are different now, but despite the differences the methods are the same, and architecture is no longer simply the "skillful, accurate, and magnificent play of masses seen in light."

The Strip by day is a different place, no longer Byzantine.[34] The forms of the buildings are visible but remain secondary to the signs in visual impact and symblic content. The space of urban sprawl is not enclosed and directed as in traditional cities. Rather, it is open and indeterminate, identified by points in space and patterns on the ground; these are two-dimensional or sculptural symbols in space rather than buildings in space, complex configurations that are graphic or representational. Acting as symbols, the signs and buildings identify the space by their location and direction, and space is further defined and directed by utility poles and street and parking patterns. In residential sprawl the orientation of houses toward the street, their stylistic treatment as decorated sheds, and their landscaping and lawn fixtures — wagon wheels, mailboxes on erect chains, colonial lamps, and segments of split-rail fences — substitute for the signs of commercial sprawl as the definers of space.[35]

Like the complex architectural accumulations of the Roman Forum, the Strip by day reads as chaos if you perceive only its forms and exclude its symbolic content. The Forum, like the Strip, was a landscape of symbols with layers of meaning evident in the location of roads and buildings, buildings representing earlier buildings, and the sculpture piled all over. Formally the Forum was an awful mess; symbolically it was a rich mix.

The series of triumphal arches in Rome is a prototype of the billboard (mutatis mutandis for scale, speed, and content). The architectural ornament, including pilasters, pediments, and coffers, is a kind of bas-relief that makes only a gesture toward architectural form. It is as symbolic as the bas-reliefs of processions and the inscriptions that compete for the surface.[37] Along with their function as billboards carrying messages, the triumphal arches in the Roman Forum were spatial markers channeling processional paths within a complex urban landscape. On Route 66 the billboards, set in series at a constant angle toward the oncoming traffic, with a standard distance between themselves and from the roadside, perform a formal-spatial function. Often the

brightest, cleanest, and best-maintained elements in industrial sprawl, the billboards both cover and beautify that landscape. Like the configurations of sepulchral monuments along the Via Appia (again mutatis mutandis for scale), they mark the way through the vast spaces beyond urban sprawl. But these spatial characteristics of form, position, and orientation are secondary to their symbolic function. Along the highway, advertising Tanya via graphics and anatomy, like advertising the victories of Constantine via inscriptions and bas-reliefs, is more important than identifying the space.[38]


EVEN MAILBOXES CAN BE CHARMING
Rural mailboxes need not be drab. Here are four ingenious ideas which four Pennsylvania residents used to dress up their roadside receptacles and brighten the mailman's day.
Since the conventional box resembles the engine hood of a tractor, one farm owner added spoke wheels, a seat and steering device, as well as a midget muffler to complete the picture. Another welded horseshoes together for a mailbox support.
Another refashioned the rounded mailbox roof into a miniature, old-time Conestoga wagon, a broad-wheeled vehicle resembling the covered prairie schooners. Four small wooden wheels were attached to the bottom of the box, and the body was painted to simulate a canvas-stretched shelter.
Still another attached his mailbox to an iron water pump located along the road and he added his name plate to the handle of the brightly-painted pump. Now he just pumps for his mail!
THE HELLERS
KERMIT & MAVIS

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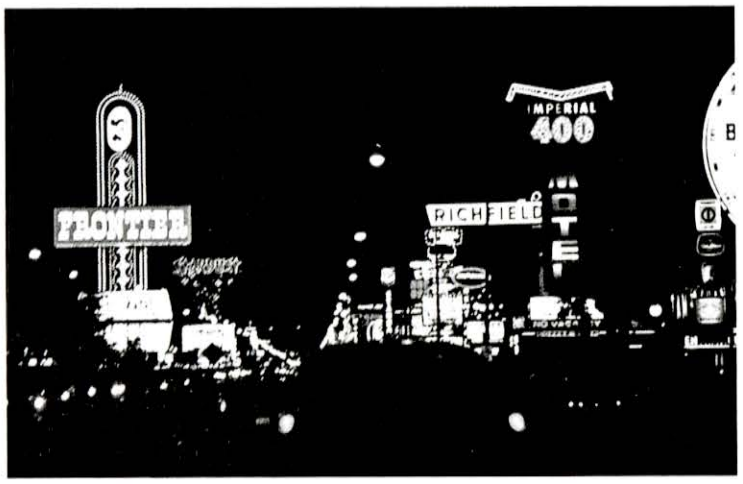


33. Las Vegas Strip at night

34. Las Vegas Strip by day

35. Suburban residential sprawl

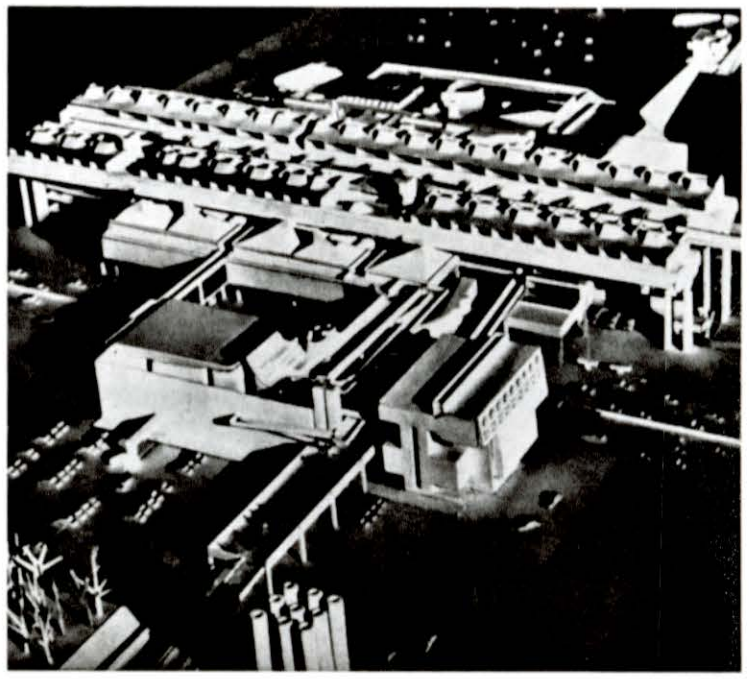
37. Arch of Constantine, Rome

38. Tanya billboard, Las Vegas

Urban Sprawl and the Megastructure

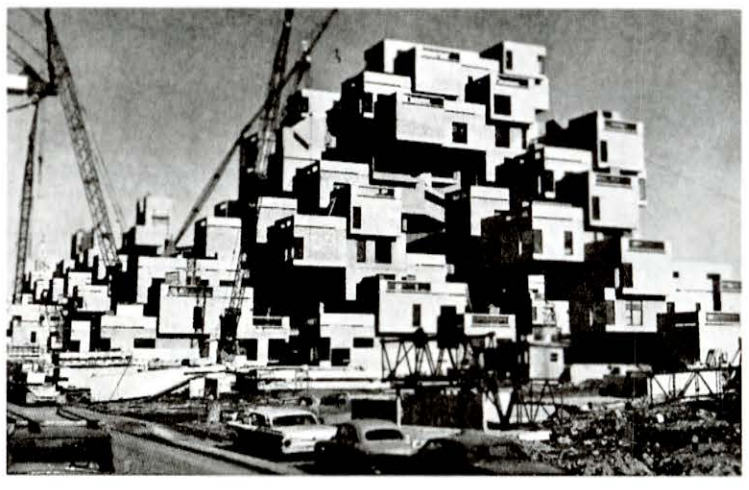
The urban manifestations of ugly and ordinary architecture and the decorated shed are closer to urban sprawl than to the megastructure.[39,40] We have explained how, for us, commercial vernacular architecture was a vivid initial source for symbolism in architecture. We have described in the Las Vegas study the victory of symbols-in-space over forms-in-space in the brutal automobile landscape of great distances and high speed, where the subtleties of pure architectural space can no longer be savored. But the symbolism of urban sprawl lies also in its residential architecture, not only in the strident, roadside communications of the commercial strip (decorated shed or duck). Although the ranch house, split level or otherwise, conforms in its spatial configuration to several set patterns, it is appliqued with varied though conforming ornament, evoking combinations of Colonial, New Orleans, Regency, Western, French Provincial, Modern, and other styles. Garden apartments — especially those of the Southwest — equally are decorated sheds whose pedestrian courts, like those of motels, are separate from, but close to, the automobile. A comparison of urban sprawl with the megastructure is made in Table 2.[41, 42]

Sprawl city's image is a result of process. In this respect it follows the canons of Modern architecture that require form to result from function, structure, and construction methods, that is, from the processes of its making. But for our time the megastructure is a distortion of normal city building process for the sake inter alia of image. Modern architects contradict themselves when they support functionalism and the megastructure. They do not recognize the image of the process city when they see it on the Strip, because it is both too familiar and too different from what they have been trained to accept.



39. Las Vegas Strip

40. Town center, Cumbernauld, Scotland (Cumbernauld Development Corporation)



41. Residential strip

42. Habitat, Expo '67, Moshe Safdie

Table 2 Comparison of Urban Sprawl with Megastructure

Urban Sprawl	Megastructure
Ugly and ordinary	Heroic and original
Depends on explicit symbolism	Rejects explicit symbolism
Symbols in space	Forms in space
Image	Form
Mixed media	Pure architecture
Big signs designed by commercial artists	Little signs (and only if absolutely necessary) designed by "graphic artists"
Auto environment	Post- and pre-auto environment
Cars	Public transportation
Takes the parking lot seriously and pastiches the pedestrian	"Straight" architecture with serious but egocentric aims for the pedestrian; it irresponsibly ignores or tries to "piazzafy" the parking lot
Disneyland	Piazzas
Promoted by salesmen	Promoted by experts
Feasible and being built	Technologically feasible perhaps, but socially and economically unfeasible
Popular life-style	"Correct" life-style
Historical styles	Modern style
Uses typological models	Uses original creations
Process city	Instant city
Broadacre City	Ville Radieuse
Looks awful	Makes a nice model
Architects don't like	Architects like
20th-century communication technology	19th-century industrial vision
Social realism	Science fiction
Expedience	Technological indulgence
Expedient	Visionary
Ambiguous urban image	Traditional urban image
Vital mess	"Total Design" (and design review boards)
Building for men (markets)	Building for Man
This year's problems	The old architectural revolution
Heterogeneous images	The image of the middle-class intelligentsia
The difficult image	The easy image
The difficult whole	The easy whole

THEORY OF UGLY AND ORDINARY AND RELATED AND CONTRARY THEORIES

Origins and Further Definition of Ugly and Ordinary

Let us describe our own experience as architects to explain how we came to ugly and ordinary architecture.

After the appearance of Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture,[5] we began to realize that few of our firm's buildings were complex and contradictory, at least not in their purely architectural qualities of space and structure as opposed to their symbolic content. We had failed to fit into our buildings double-functioning or vestigial elements, circumstantial distortions, expedient devices, eventful exceptions, exceptional diagonals, things in things, crowded or contained intricacies, linings or layerings, residual spaces, redundant spaces, ambiguities, inflections, dualities, difficult wholes, or the phenomena of both-and. There was little in our work of inclusion, inconsistency, compromise, accommodation, adaptation, superadjacency, equivalence, multiple focus, juxtaposition, or good and bad space.

Most of the complexities and contradictions we relished thinking about we did not use, because we did not have the opportunity. Venturi and Rauch did not get big commissions whose programs and settings justified complex and contradictory forms, and as artists we could not impose on our work inapplicable ideas that we liked as critics. A building should not be a vehicle for an architect's ideas, etc. Also our budgets were low, and we did not want to design a building twice – once to fit some heroic idea of its importance to society and the world of art and, after the bids come in, a second time to reflect the client's and society's restricted idea of our architecture's value. Whether society was right or wrong was not for us at that moment to argue. Therefore our Brighton

5. Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (New York: The Museum of Modern Art and Graham Foundation, 1966).

Beach Housing entry did not turn out a megastructure for living in or our Fire Station in Columbus, Indiana, a personalized essay in civic monumentality for a pedestrian piazza by the side of the highway. They turned out "ugly and ordinary," as two such divergent critics as Philip Johnson and Gordon Bunshaft have described our work. "Ugly" or "beautiful" is perhaps a question of semantics in this context, but these two architects did catch the spirit, in a way.

Architecture may be ordinary — or rather, conventional — in two ways: in how it is constructed or in how it is seen, that is, in its process or in its symbolism. To construct conventionally is to use ordinary materials and engineering, accepting the present and usual organization of the building industry and financial structure and hoping to ensure fast, sound, and economical construction. This is good in the short run, and the short run is what our clients have largely retained us architects for. Architectural theories of the short run tend toward the idealization and generalization of expediency. Architecture for the long run requires creation, rather than adaptation, and response to advanced technology and sophisticated organization. It depends on sound research that may perhaps be promoted in the architect's office but should be financed outside it, because the client's fee is not adequate for and not intended for that purpose. Although architects have not wished to recognize it, most architectural problems are of the expedient type, and the more architects become involved in social problems, the more this is true. In general the world cannot wait for the architect to build his utopia, and in the main the architect's concern ought not to be with what ought to be but with what is — and with how to help improve it now. This is a humbler role for architects than the Modern movement has wanted to accept; however, it is artistically a more promising one.

Ugly and Ordinary as Symbol and Style

Artistically, the use of conventional elements in ordinary architecture – be they dumb doorknobs or the familiar forms of existing construction systems – evokes associations from past experience. Such elements may be carefully chosen or thoughtfully adapted from existing vocabularies or standard catalogs rather than uniquely created via original data and artistic intuition. To design a window, for instance, you start not only with the abstract function of modulating diurnal light rays to serve interior space but with the image of window – of all the windows you know plus others you find out about. This approach is symbolically and functionally conventional, but it promotes an architecture of meaning, broader and richer if less dramatic than the architecture of expression.

We have shown how heroic and original (H&O) architecture derives dramatic expression from the connotative meanings of its "original" elements: It gives off abstract meanings – or rather, expressions – recognizable in the physiognomic character of the architectural elements. The ugly and ordinary (U&O) architecture, on the other hand, includes denotative meanings as well, derived from its familiar elements; that is, it suggests more or less concrete meanings via association and past experience. The "brutalism" of an H&O fire station comes from its rough texture; its civic monumentality comes from its big scale; the expression of structure and program and "truth to materials" comes from the particular articulations of its forms. Its total image derives from these purely architectural qualities transmitted through abstract forms, textures, and colors, carefully composed. The total image of our U&O fire house – an image implying civic character as well as specific use – comes from the conventions of roadside architecture that it follows; from the decorated false facade, from the banality through familiarity of the standard aluminum sash and roll-up doors, and from the flagpole in front – not to mention the conspicuous sign that identifies it through spelling, the most denotative of symbols: FIRE STATION NO. 4. These elements act as symbols as well as expressive architectural abstractions. They are not merely ordinary but represent ordinariness symbolically and stylistically; they are enriching as well, because they add a layer of literary meaning.

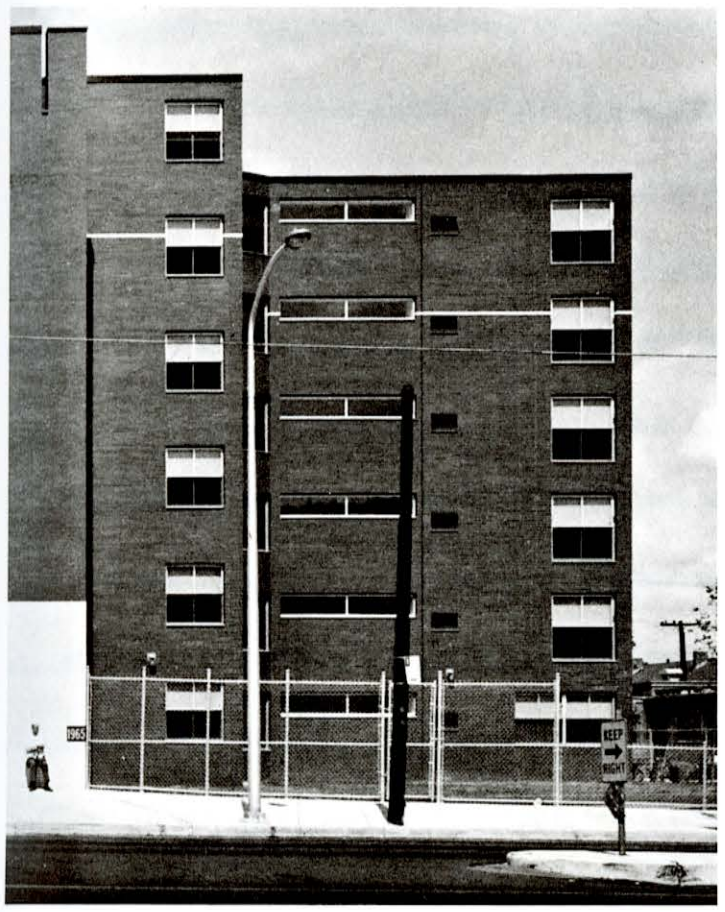
Richness can come from conventional architecture. For 300 years European architecture was variations on a Classical norm – a rich conformity. But it can also come through an adjusting of the scale or context of familiar and conventional elements to produce unusual meanings. Pop artists used unusual juxtapositions of everyday objects in tense and vivid plays between old and new associations to flout the everyday interdependence of context and meaning, giving us a new interpretation of twentieth-century cultural artifacts. The familiar that is a little off has a strange and revealing power.

The double-hung window in Guild House is familiar in form but unusually large in size and horizontal in proportion, like the big, distorted Campbell Soup can in Andy Warhol's painting. This typical window is also juxtaposed with a smaller window of the same form and proportion. The exact location of the bigger window on a parallel plane behind the smaller window tends to disturb the habitual

perception of distance through perspective; the resultant symbolic and otpical tensions are, we maintain, a means of making boring architecture interesting[45] — a more valid means than the irrelevant articulations of today's strident but boring minimegastructures.

43. Central Fire Station, New Haven, 1959-1962, Earl P. Carlin, Architect; Paul E. Pozzi, Peter Millard, Associates

44. Fire Station No. 4, Columbus, Indiana, 1965-1967, Venturi and Rauch



45. Guild House, windows

Against Ducks, or Ugly and Ordinary over Heroic and Original, or Think Little

We should not emphasize the ironic richness of banality in today's artistic context at the expense of discussing its appropriateness and inevitability on a wider basis. Why do we uphold the symbolism of the ordinary via the decorated shed over the symbolism of the heroic via the sculptural duck? Because this is not the time and ours is not the environment for heroic communication through pure architecture. Each medium has its day, and the rhetorical environmental statements of our time — civic, commercial, or residential — will come from media more purely symbolic, perhaps less static and more adaptable to the scale of our environment. The iconography and mixed media of roadside commercial architecture will point the way, if we will look.

Housing for the elderly on the Oak Street Connector, if it had to be a monument, would have been more economical, socially responsible, and amenable, as a conventional apartment building, lost by the side of the expressway, with a big sign on top blinking, I AM A MONUMENT. Decoration is cheaper.

Theories of Symbolism and Association in Architecture

Basic to the argument for the decorated shed is the assumption that symbolism is essential in architecture and that the model from a previous time or from the existing city is part of the source material, and the replication[6] of elements is part of the design method of this architecture; that is, architecture that depends on association in the perception of it depends on association in the creation of it.

We have approached the justification of symbolism in architecture pragmatically, using concrete examples, rather than abstractly through the science of semiology or through a priori theorizing.[7] However, other approaches have rendered similar results. Alan Colquhoun has written of architecture as part of a "system of communications within society" and describes the anthropological and psychological basis for the use of a typology of forms in design, suggesting that not only are we not "free from the forms of the past, and from the availability of these forms as typological models, but that, if we assume we are free, we have lost control over a very active sector of our imagination and of our power to communicate with others."[8]

Colquhoun describes the essentially "representational" quality of the artifacts of primitive culture and their relationships, and discusses the continuing anthropological basis for "iconic values" in the products of technology. The cosmological systems of primitive man were not "close to nature" but intellectual and artificial. Colquhoun illustrates this point by quoting from Claude Lévi-Strauss's description of kinship systems:[9]

> Certainly the biological family is present and persists in human society. But what gives to kinship its character as a social fact is not what it must conserve of nature; it is the essential step by which it separates itself from nature. A system of kinship does not consist of objective blood ties; it exists only in the consciousness of men; it is an arbitrary system of representations, not the spontaneous development of a situation of fact.

Colquhoun claims that there is a

> parallel between such systems and the way modern man still approaches the world. And what was true of primitive man in all the ramifications of his practical and emotional life – namely the need to represent the phenomenal world in such a way that it becomes a coherent and logical system – persists in our own organizations, and more particularly in our attitude toward the man-made objects of our environment.[10]

The perceptual-psychological necessity for representation in art and architecture in Colquhoun's argument is based on E. H. Gombrich's book Meditations on a Hobby Horse. Gombrich rejects the belief born of Modern Expressionist theory that "shapes have physiognomic or expressive content which communicates itself to us directly."[11] He demonstrates, Colquhoun says, that

> the arrangement of forms such as found in a painting by Kandinsky is in fact very low in content, unless we attribute to these forms some system of conventional meanings not inherent in the forms themselves. His thesis is that physiognomic forms are ambiguous, though not wholly without expressive value, and that they can

6. G. Hersey, "Replication Replicated," Perspecta 10, The Yale Architectural Journal, New Haven (1955), pp. 211-248.

7. These approaches have recently been explored in a series of essays edited by Charles Jencks and George Baird, Meaning in Architecture (New York: George Braziller, 1969). We are indebted particularly to the formulations of Charles Jencks, George Baird, and Alan Colquhoun.

8. Alan Colquhoun, "Typology and Design Method," Arena, Journal of the Architectural Association (June 1967), pp. 11-14, republished in Charles Jencks and George Baird, Meaning in Architecture.

9. Claude Lévi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

10. Colquhoun, "Typology and Design Method," pp. 11-14.

11. E. H. Gombrich, Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on Art (London: Phaidon Press; Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1963), pp. 45-69.

only be interpreted within a particular cultural ambience.[12]

Gombrich illustrates this by reference to the supposed inherent affective qualities of color exemplified in traffic signals; and Colquhoun cites the recent adoption by the Chinese of the color red for go, indicating action and forward movement, and of green for stop, indicating inaction and caution — this easy reversal itself indicating the triumph of conventional over physiognomic meanings.

Colquhoun argues against the proposition of Modern architecture that form should be the result of the application of physical or mathematical laws rather than of previous association or aesthetic ideologies. Not only are these laws themselves human constructs, but in the real world, even the world of advanced technology, they are not totally determining; there are areas of free choice. If, "in a world of pure technology this area is invariably dealt with by adapting previous solutions," then even more will this be the case in architecture where laws and facts are still less capable of leading directly to form. He grants that systems of representation are not altogether independent of the facts of the objective world, and indeed "the modern movement in architecture was an attempt to modify the representational systems which had been inherited from the pre-industrial past, and which had no longer seemed operable within the context of a rapidly changing technology."[13]

The viewing of physical laws and empirical facts as the fundamental source of form in Modern architectural theory Colquhoun calls "bio-technical determinism":

> And it is from this theory that the current belief in the supreme importance of scientific methods of analysis and classification derives. The essence of the functional doctrine of the modern movement was not that beauty or order or meaning were unnecessary, but that it could no longer be found in the deliberate search for final form, and the path by which the artifact affected the observer aesthetically was seen as short-circuiting the process of formalization. Form was merely the result of a logical process by which the operational needs and the operational techniques were brought together. Ultimately these would fuse in a kind of biological extension of life, and function and technology would become totally transparent.[14]

The limitations inherent in this approach, even for technical engineering problems, were acknowledged — obliquely — in Modern theory. But they were to be overcome through the integrating magic of intuition and without reference to historical models. That form results from intention as well as deterministic process was acknowledged in the writings of Le Corbusier, Laslo Moholy-Nagy, and other leaders of the Modern movement in their descriptions of the "intuition," "imagination," "inventiveness," and "free and innumerable plastic events" that regulate architectural design. What resulted, Colquhoun says, was a "tension of two apparently contradictory ideas — biological determinism on one hand, and free expression on the other," within the doctrine of the Modern movement. Through excluding a body

12. Colquhoun, "Typology and Design Method," pp. 11-14.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.

of traditional practice for the sake of "science," a vacuum was left that was filled ironically by a form of permissive expressionism: "What appears on the surface as a hard, rational discipline of design, turns out rather paradoxically to be a mystical belief in the intuitive process."[15]

15. Ibid.

Firmness + Commodity ≠ Delight: Modern Architecture and the Industrial Vernacular

Vitruvius wrote (via Sir Henry Wootton) that architecture was Firmness and Commodity and Delight. Gropius (via the bio-technical determinism just described) implied that Firmness and Commodity equal Delight; that structure plus program rather simply result in form; that beauty is a by-product; and that — to tamper with the equation in another way — the process of making architecture becomes the image of architecture. Louis Kahn in the 1950s said that the architect should be surprised by the appearance of his design.

Presumed in these equations is that process and image are never contradictory and that Delight is a result of the clarity and harmony of these simple relationships, untinged, of course, by the beauty of symbolism and ornament or by the associations of preconceived form: Architecture is frozen process.

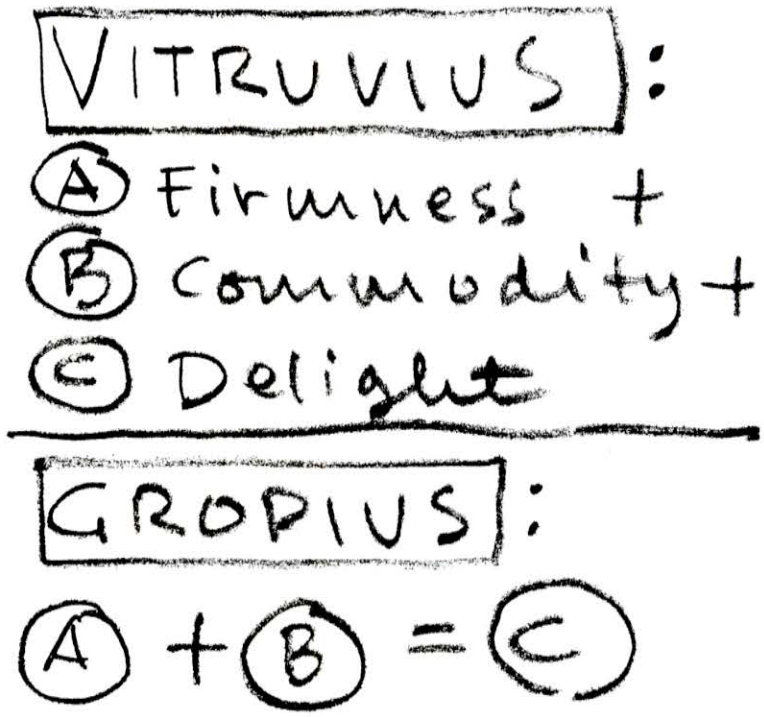
The historians of the Modern movement concentrated on the innovative engineering structures of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as prototypes for Modern architecture, but it is significant that the bridges of Maillart are not architecture, and the hangars of Freysinnet are hardly architecture. As engineering solutions, their programs are simple and without the inherent contradictions of architectural programs. To traverse a ravine directly, safely, and cheaply or to protect a big space from the rain without intervening supports is all that is required of these structures. The unavoidable symbolic content of even such simple, utilitarian constructions and the unavoidable

use of what Colquhoun calls typologies were ignored by the theorists of the Modern movement. The not infrequent ornamentation of these forms was excused as a deviant architectural hangover, characteristic of the times. But the ornamentation of utilitarian superstructures is typical of all times. The defensive walls of the medieval city were topped with elaborately varied crenelations and studded with rhetorically ornamented gates. The applied decorations of the classic structures of the Industrial Revolution (we see them as more classic than innovative) are another manifestation of the decorated shed – for example, the elaborated gusset plates of the frame bridges, or the modified Corinthian capitals of the fluted cast-iron columns in loft buildings, or the eclectically stylish entrances and fanciful parapets of their fronts.

The decoration of the shed in nineteeth-century industrial architecture was often ignored by architects and theorists of the Modern movement through selective viewing of buildings or through contrived cropping of photographs. Even today as architects stress the complexity of these buildings (for instance, the complex massing and clerestoried roof lines of the mills of the English industrial midlands) rather than their simplicity, their not infrequent ornament is still discounted.

Mies van der Rohe looked at only the backs of Albert Kahn's factories in the Midwest when he came to the United States and developed his minimal vocabulary of steel I-sections framing industrial sash. The fronts of

Kahn's sheds almost always contained administrative offices and, being early twentieth-century creations, were graciously Art Deco rather than historical eclectic. The plastic massing up front, characteristic of this style, grandly contradicted the skeletal behind.



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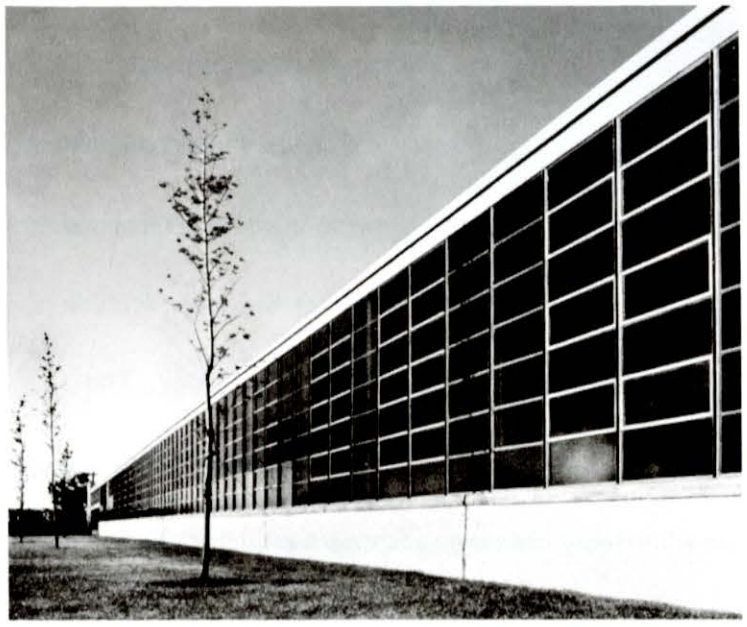


47. Plant for Lady Esther, Ltd., Clearing, Illinois; Albert Kahn

48. Plant for Lady Esther, Ltd.

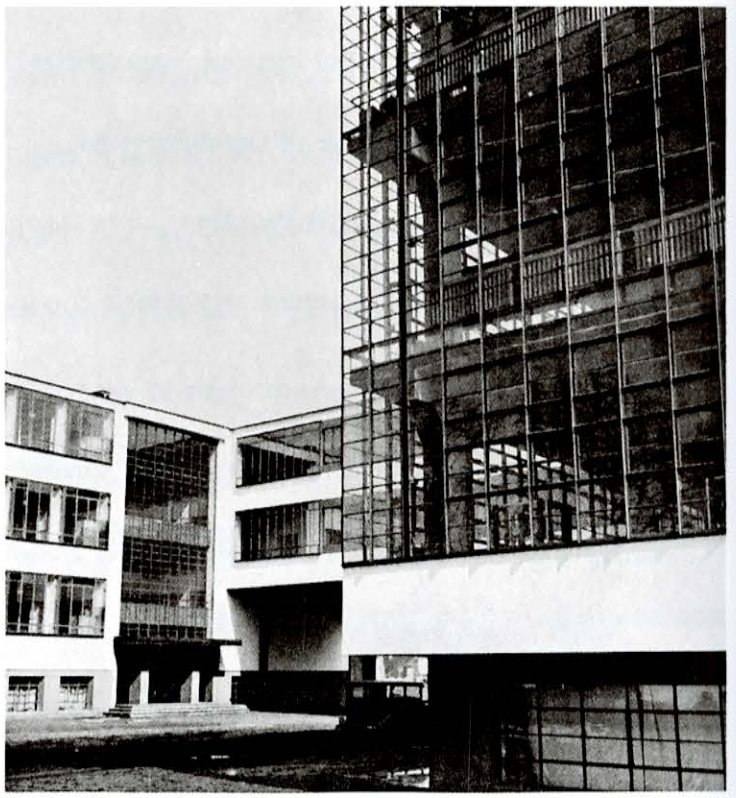
Industrial Iconography

More important than forgetting the decoration was copying the shed, that is, deriving associations from the body of the building rather than from its facade. The architecture of the Modern movement, during its early decades and through a number of its masters, developed a vocabulary of forms based on a variety of industrial models whose conventions and proportions were no less explicit than the Classical orders of the Renaissance. What Mies did with linear industrial buildings in the 1940s, Le Corbusier had done with plastic grain elevators in the 1920s, and Gropius had done with the Bauhaus in the 1930s, imitating his own earlier factory, the Faguswerk, of 1911. Their factorylike buildings were more than "influenced" by the industrial vernacular structures of the then recent past, in the sense that historians have described influences among artists and movements. Their buildings were explicitly adapted from these sources, and largely for their symbolic content, because industrial structures represented, for European architects, the brave new world of science and technology. The architects of the early Modern movement, in discarding the admittedly obsolete symbolism of historical eclecticism, substituted that of the industrial vernacular. To put it another way, as Romantics still, they achieved a new sensibility through evoking the remote in place — that is, the contemporary industrial quarter on the other side of the tracks, which they transferred to the civic areas of the city — rather than evoking, as did the earlier Romantics, the remote in time through the replication of stylistic ornament of the past. That is, the Moderns employed a design method based on typological models and developed an architectural iconography based on their interpretation of the progressive technology of the Industrial Revolution.[49]

Colquhoun refers to the "iconic power" attributed by "those in the field of design who were — and are — preaching pure technology and so-called objective design method . . . to the creations of technology, which they worship to a degree inconceivable in a scientist."[16] He also writes of "the power of all artifacts to become icons . . . whether or not they were specifically created for this purpose," and he cites nineteenth-century steamships and locomotives as examples of objects "made ostensibly with utilitarian purposes in mind" which "quickly become gestalt entities . . . imbued with aesthetic unity" and symbolic quality. These objects, along with the factories and grain elevators, became explicit typological models that, despite what architects said to the contrary, significantly influenced the method of Modern architectural design and served as sources for its symbolic meanings.

16. Ibid.

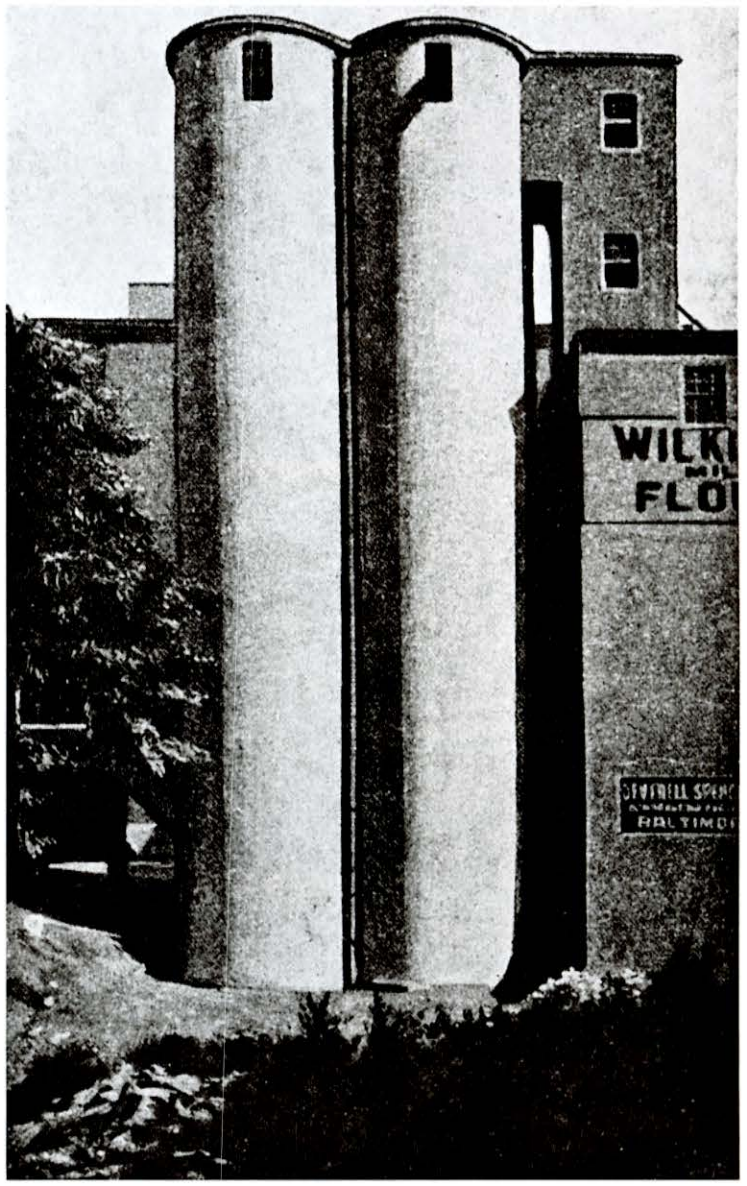
49. Bauhaus, Dessau, Germany, 1925-1926; Walter Gropius



Industrial Styling and the Cubist Model

Later critics referred to a "machine aesthetic," and others have accepted the term, but Le Corbusier among the Modern masters was unique in elaborately describing industrial prototypes for his architecture in Vers une Architecture[50]. However, even he claimed the steamship and the grain elevator for their forms rather than their associations, for their simple geometry rather than their industrial image. It is significant, on the other hand, that the buildings of Le Corbusier, illustrated in his book, physically resemble the steamships and the grain elevators but not the Parthenon or the furniture in Santa Maria in Cosmedin and Michelangelo's details for Saint Peter's, which are also illustrated for their simple geometric forms. The industrial prototypes became literal models for Modern architecture, while the historical-architectural prototypes were merely analogs selected for certain of their characteristics. To put it another way, the industrial buildings were the right style; the historical buildings were not.

of architecture of that time concerning "the skillful, accurate and magnificent play of masses seen in light."



50. Grain elevator from Le Corbusier's Towards a New Architecture

For the abstract geometrical formalism of Le Corbusier's architecture at this time, Cubism was the model. It was the second model, in part countering that of the nautical-industrial images, and it accounted for the hovering, stuccoed planes that enveloped the industrial sash and spiral stairs in the Villa Savoye. Although historians describe the relation between painting and architecture at this time as a harmonious diffusion of the Zeitgeist, it was more an adaptation of the language of painting to that of architecture. The systems of pure, simple forms, sometimes transparent, that penetrate flowing space were explicitly associated with Cubism and fitted Le Corbusier's famous definition

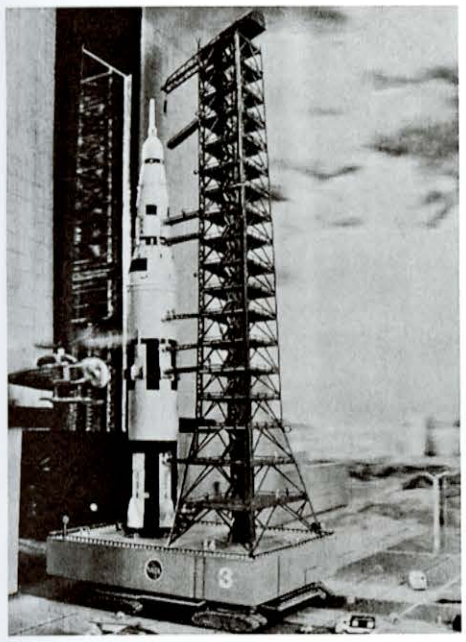
Symbolism Unadmitted

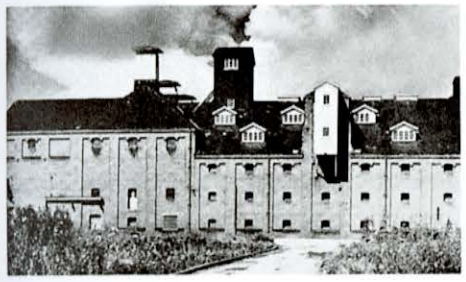
A contradiction between what was said and what was done was typical of early times in Modern architecture: Walter Gropius decried the term "International Style" but created an architectural style and spread a vocabulary of industrial forms that were quite removed from industrial processes. Adolf Loos condemned ornament yet applied beautiful patterns in his own designs and would have erected the most magnificent, if ironic, symbol in the history of skyscrapers if he had won the Chicago Tribune competition. The later work of Le Corbusier started a continuing tradition of unacknowledged symbolism, whose indigenous-vernacular forms, in varying manifestations, are still with us.

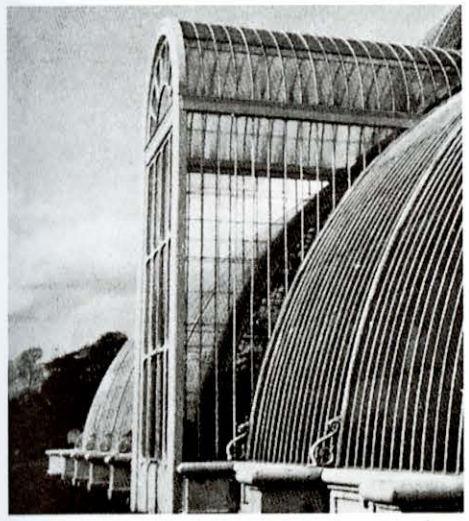
But it is the contradiction — or at least the lack of correspondence — between image and substance that confirms the role of symbolism and association in orthodox Modern architecture. As we have said, the symbolism of Modern architecture is usually technological and functional, but when these functional elements work symbolically, they usually do not work functionally, for example, Mies's symbolically exposed but substantively encased steel frame and Rudolph's béton brut in concrete block or his "mechanical" shafts used for an apartment house rather than a research lab. Some latter-day Modern architectural contradictions are the use of flowing space for private functions, glass walls for western exposures, industrial clerestories for suburban high schools, exposed ducts that collect dust and conduct sound, mass-produced systems for underdeveloped countries, and the impressions of wooden formwork in the concrete of high-labor-cost economies.

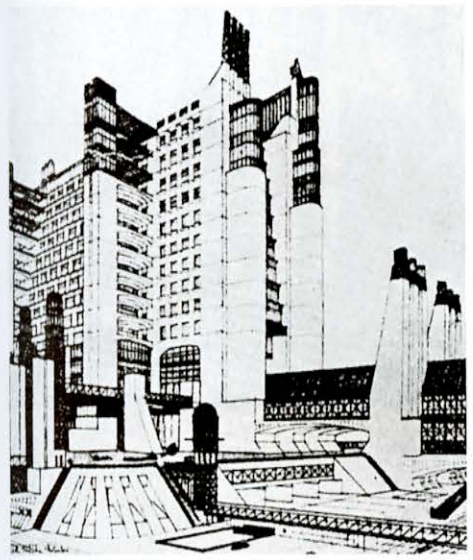
We catalog here the failures of these functional elements to function as structure, program, mechanical equipment, lighting, or industrial process, not to criticize them (although on functional grounds they should be criticized), but to demonstrate their symbolism. Nor are we interested in criticizing the functional-technological content of early Modern architectural symbolism. What we criticize is the symbolic content of current Modern architecture and the architect's refusal to acknowledge symbolism.

Modern architects have substituted one set of symbols (Cubist-industrial-process) for another (Romantic-historical-eclecticism) but without being aware of it. This has made for confusing and ironic contradictions that are still with us. The diversity of styles (not to mention the syntactical correctness and suave precision) of the architecture of the 1960s might challenge the versatility of a Victorian eclectic of the 1860s. The following models serve as sources for symbolic representation in our best buildings today: Cape Kennedy launching pads[51]; the industrial vernacular of the English Midlands[52]; Victorian greenhouses[53]; Futurist zoots[54]; Constructivist protomegastructures[55]; space frames[56]; Piranesian carceri[57]; plastic forms indigenous to the Mediterranean[58]; pedestrian scale, medieval-space Tuscan hill towns[59]; and the works of the form givers of the Heroic period.[60]









51. Cape Kennedy

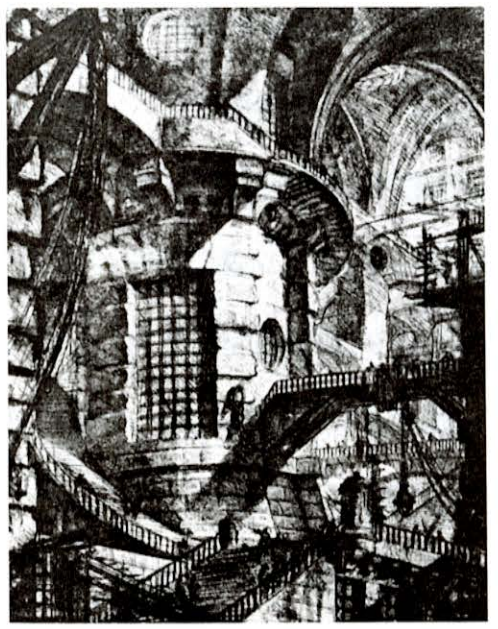
52. St. Stephen's Maltings, Canterbury

53. Palm House, Kew

54. Project for a Subway, 1914;
Antonio Sant' Elia

55. Russian constructivist sketch for an industrial building from Tchernikov's 101 Fantasies

56. Geodesic "Playdome"; Buckminster Fuller



57. Carceri; Giovanni Battista Piranesi

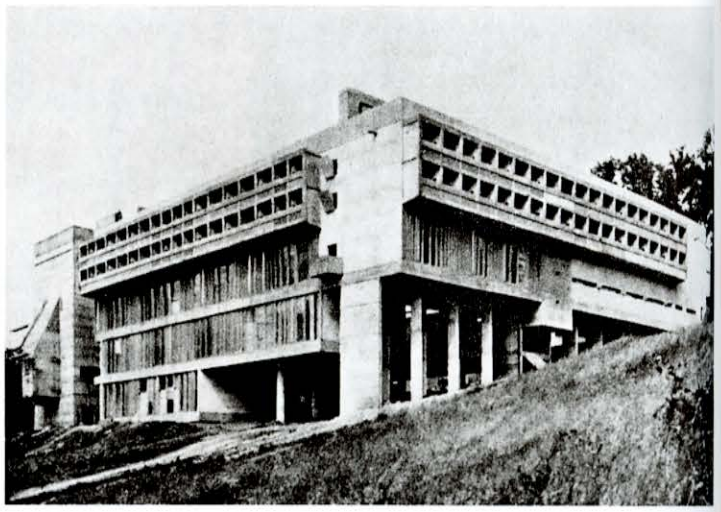
58. Procida, Italy

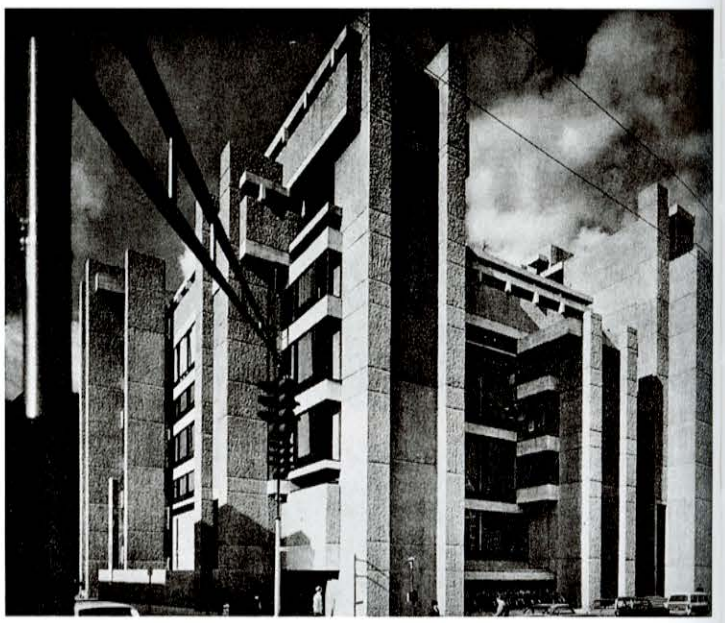
59. Piazza Cavour, San Gimignano

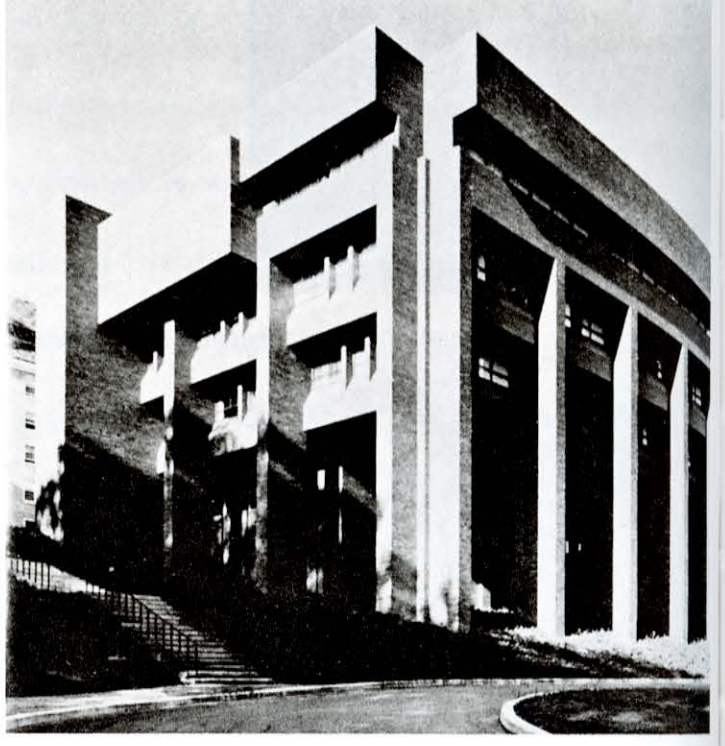
60. High Court building, Chandigarh, 1951-1956; Le Corbusier

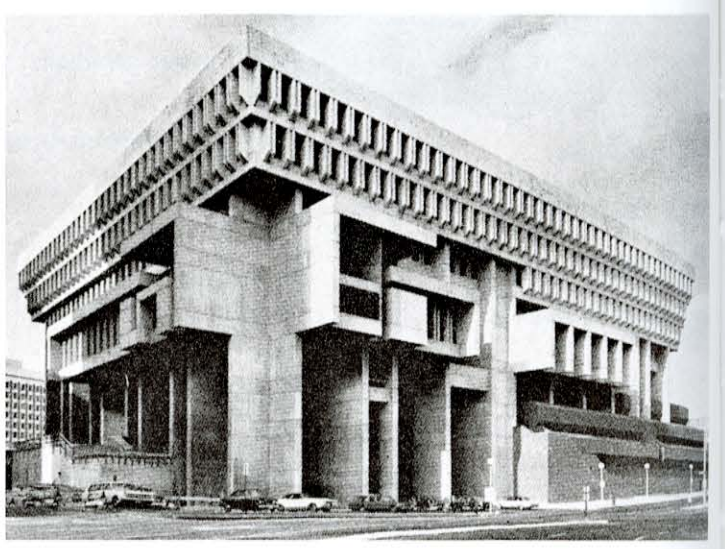
From Latourette to Neiman-Marcus

The stylistic evolution from Latourette to Neiman-Marcus is a characteristic development of form-giver symbolism in late Modern architecture. Le Corbusier's tense manifestation of late genius, a monastery in a Burgundian field,[61] is itself a brilliant adaptation of a white plastic vernacular of the eastern Mediterranean. Its forms became an Art and Architecture Building on a street corner in New Haven,[62] a brick laboratory on the campus at Cornell,[63] and a palazzo pubblico[64] in a piazza in Boston. A latest version of this Burgundian cloister is a department store off the Westheimer Strip in suburban Houston — a pure symbol of progressive gentility set in a sea of parking.[65, 66] Again, we do not criticize these replications of a classic masterpiece in a different place for a different use, although we suggest the replication would have been done better if it had been accepted philosophically and used wittily, as in the case of a Beaux-Arts department store designed after an Italian palazzo. This series of buildings from Burgundy to Texas illustrates the Modern architect's tendency to glorify originality through copying it.







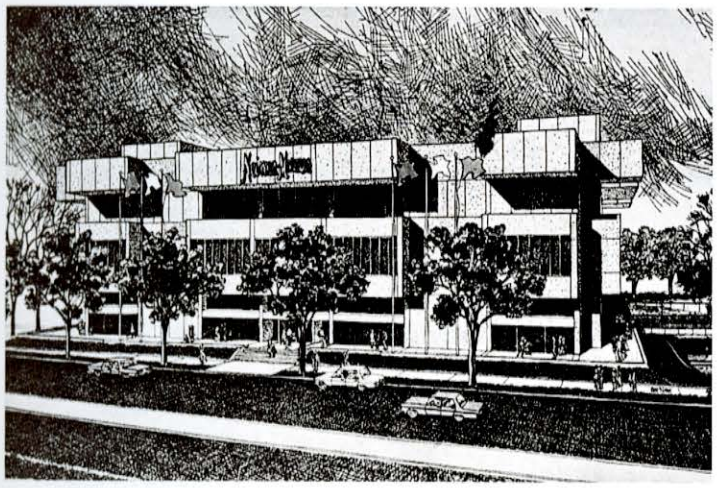


61. Monastery of La Tourette, Evreux, France, 1956-1960; Le Corbusier

62. Yale University Art and Architecture building, New Haven, 1962-1963; Paul Rudolph

63. Cornell University Agronomy building, Ithaca, New York, 1963-1968; Ulrich Franzen

64. City Hall, Boston, 1963; Kallman, McKinnell, and Knowles



65. Neiman-Marcus building, Houston, Texas; Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum

66. Neiman-Marcus building

Slavish Formalism and Articulated Expressionism

Substituting nonfunctioning imitations of a deterministic process for preconceived form has resulted not only in confusion and irony but in a formalism that is the more slavish for being unadmitted. Those planners and architects who decry formalism in architecture are frequently rigid and arbitrary when the time comes for committing their projects to form. Urban designers, having learned the antiformalist pieties of the architectural profession and the critique of "physical bias" of the planning profession, are often caught in this dilemma. Once the "planning process" has been planned and the "guidelines for development" have been set, plans are filled in to show "possible developments" in the fashionable shapes of the architectural leader fancied by the recent graduate who happens to be "on the design side" of the project in the office at that time, whether or not this leader's formal vocabulary would be more relevant to the problem than some other formal vocabulary.

The substitution of expression for representation through disdain for symbolism and ornament has resulted in an architecture where expression has become expressionism. Owing perhaps to the meager meanings available from abstract forms and unadorned functional elements, the characteristic forms of late Modern architecture are often overstated. Conversely, they are often understated in their context as with Latourette on the Westheimer Strip. Louis Kahn once called exaggeration the architect's tool to create ornament. But exaggeration of structure and program (and, in the 1950s and 1960s, mechanical equipment, that is, ducts equal decoration) has become a substitute for ornament.

Articulation as Ornament

To replace ornament and explicit symbolism, Modern architects indulge in distortion and overarticulation. Strident distortion at large scale and "sensitive" articulation at small scale result in an expressionism that is, to us, meaningless and irrelevant, an architectural soap opera in which to be progressive is to look outlandish. On the one hand, consider all those residential, civic, and institutional buildings whose thin complexities (stepped terraces; accordion sections, or plans or elevations; cantilevered clerestories; diagonal zoots; textured striations and flying bridges or buttresses) almost parallel the strident distortions of a McDonald's Hamburger stand but lack the commercial program and distracting setting that justify the stridency of Strip architecture. On the other hand, consider sensitively articulated structural frames and cantilevered bays that modulate a facade, define interior spaces, or reflect variations in the program. These busy bumps and subtle dents are put there for scale and rhythm and richness too, but they are as irrelevant and meaningless as the pilaster bas-relief on a Renaissance palace (which they resemble), because they are seen mostly in big spaces (often parking lots) and at high speeds.

Articulated architecture today is like a minuet in a discotheque, because even off the highway our sensibilities remain attuned to its bold scale and detail. Perhaps in the cacaphonic context of our real landscape we are impatient with any architectural detail at all. Furthermore, sensitive articulation is an expensive luxury best eliminated before the bids come in. The two-foot cantilever on the face of a building , put there to suit a sensitive nuance of the program discerned by the architect, is a hangover from more stable times. Today programs can change during the course of construction. We cannot afford too-literal conjunctions between form and transient functions. In sum, while today's forms are too strident for their function in our environment, today's details are too sensitive for the timbre of our environment. However, at the opposite extreme, there is an individual need for intimacy and detail, unmet by Modern design but satisfied by the five-eighths scale reproductions in Disneyland, by the caricatures of human scale in the patios of garden apartments, and by the seven-eighths scale furnishings of the fancy interiors of Levittown model homes.

Space as God

Perhaps the most tyrannical element in our architecture now is space. Space has been contrived by architects and deified by critics, filling the vacuum created by fugitive symbolism. If articulation has taken over from ornament in the architecture of abstract expressionism, space is what displaced symbolism. Our heroic and original symbols, from carceri to Cape Kennedy, feed our late Romantic egos and satisfy our lust for expressionistic, acrobatic space for a new age in architecture. It's space and light — light as an element for distorting space for further dramatization. The spatial replication today of the mills of the nineteenth-century industrial Midlands illustrates the irrelevance of these borrowings. The complex diagonal clerestories and sheer glass walls and roofs of early industrial architecture responded to the need for natural light and the availability of minimum artificial light for a 12-hour working day in a latitude where winter days are short and winters are long. On the other hand, the Manchester millowner could depend on a cool climate in the summer, low heating standards in the winter, and cheap and docile labor to put up with the conditions and repair the leaks. Today, however, most buildings need windows to look out of rather than glass walls for light, because our lighting standards are higher than can be satisfied through daylight alone, and areas of glass must be kept small and ceilings reasonably low to contain the air conditioning and meet the budget. Therefore our aesthetic impact should come from sources other than light, more symbolic and less spatial sources.

Megastructures and Design Control

Recent Modern architecture has achieved formalism while rejecting form, promoted expressionism while ignoring ornament, and deified space while rejecting symbols. Confusions and ironies result from this unpleasantly complex and contradictory situation. Ironically we glorify originality through replication of the forms of Modern masters. There is little harm in this symbolic individualism except for its effect on the budget, but there is harm in imposing on the whole landscape heroic representations of the masters' unique creations. Such symbolic heroism is the source for the megastructure and for total design. Architects who demand evidence of process in the forms of individual buildings reject it in the form of the city where it is arguably more defensible. Total design is the opposite of the incremental city that grows through the decisions of many; total design promotes the messianic role for the architect as corrector of the mess of urban sprawl, that is, for the city dominated by pure architecture and maintained through "design review," for the architecture of urban renewal and of the fine arts commissions. The Boston City Hall and its urban complex are the archetype of enlightened urban renewal. Its profusion of symbolic forms that recall the extravagances of the General Grant period and the revival of the medieval piazza and its palazzo pubblico is in the end, a bore. It is too architectural. A conventional loft would accommodate a bureaucracy better, perhaps with a blinking sign on top saying I AM A MONUMENT.

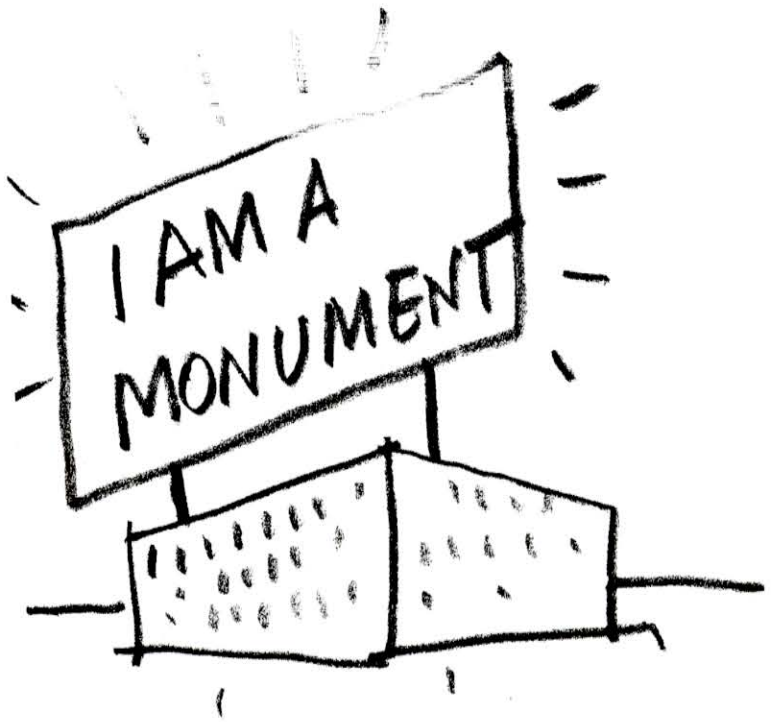
However, no architecture is not the answer to too much architecture. The reaction of the antiarchitects of Architectural Design is perhaps as futile as the endless

fondling of irrelevant subtleties at the other extreme in the other magazines, though it is possibly only less harmful because it seldom gets built, plugged in, or inflated. The world science futurist metaphysic, the megastructuralist mystique, and the look-Ma-no-buildings environmental suits and pods are a repetition of the mistakes of another generation. Their overdependence on a space-age, futurist, or science-fiction technology parallels the machine aestheticism of the 1920s and approaches its ultimate Mannerism. They are, however, unlike the architecture of the 1920s, artistically a dead-end and socially a cop out.

The megastructure has been promoted by the elaborate journalism of groups such as Archigram who reject architecture but whose urban visions and mural-scale graphics go beyond the last, megalomaniac gasps of the late Beaux Arts delineators. Unlike urban sprawl architecture, megastructures lend themselves to total design and to extremely beautiful models, significantly impressive in the boardrooms of cultural foundations or in the pages of Time magazine but unrelated to anything achievable or desirable in the present social or technical context. The occasionally witty exercises in Pop imagery of the megastructure visionaries are fine as an end in themselves, more literary than architectural in intent. They are a bore as architectural theory and ultimately, as well as immediately, unresponsive to the real and interesting problems now.

Meanwhile, every community and state is appointing its design review board to promote the architectural

revolution of the last generation and corrupt its members through rule-by-man rather than rule-by-law procedures. "Total design" comes to mean "total control" as confident art commissioners who have learned what is right promote a deadening mediocrity by rejecting the "good" and the "bad" and the new they do not recognize, all of which, in combination and in the end, make the city. (See Appendix.)



Misplaced Technological Zeal

The old revolutionaries of the fine arts commissions and the new revolutionaries of the megastructures are, in our opinion, equally irrelevant, both socially and artistically. They also share the same tradition in architectural technology, taking the progressive, revolutionary, machine-aesthetic stance of the early Modern architects; part of being "heroic and original" is being advanced technologically. The discrepancies between substance and image in Modern architecture's technological machismo and the costliness of its frequently empty gestures emerged earlier than architects would admit. Methods of industrial production turned out to be largely inapplicable to the construction of buildings. Many elegant structural systems (space frames, for instance), although they were highly efficient in relating stress to material and economical for spanning large industrial structures, failed decisively to work within the program, space, and budget of the more prosaic and usual architectural commissions. As Philip Johnson said, you can't put a door in a geodesic dome.

Furthermore, many architects who concentrated on engineering forms ignored those aspects of the building industry that involve financing, distribution, existing trades, and conventional materials and methods. These are aspects that, as the developers have known, are highly subject to the improving effects of technology, including managerial technology, and affect the final form and cost of architecture substantially more than does innovative constructional technology. Architects have contributed little to the crucial building needs of this country — especially in housing — partly because their predilections for advanced technology of the symbolic and visionary kind have impeded their effectiveness within the going systems of construction.

While focusing on their favorite form of technological voodooism over the last 40 years (that is, researching industrialized methods of prefabrication), architects have until recently ignored the mobile home industry. This industry, without the architects' help and using a traditional technology — essentially carpentry, which is then related to innovative methods of distribution — is now producing one-fifth of the annual output of housing in this country. Architects should forget about being great technical innovators in housing construction and concentrate on adapting this new and useful technology to more broadly defined needs than it serves today and on developing a vivid mobile home symbolism for mass markets.[68]

68. Mobile home community, California City, California

Which Technological Revolution?

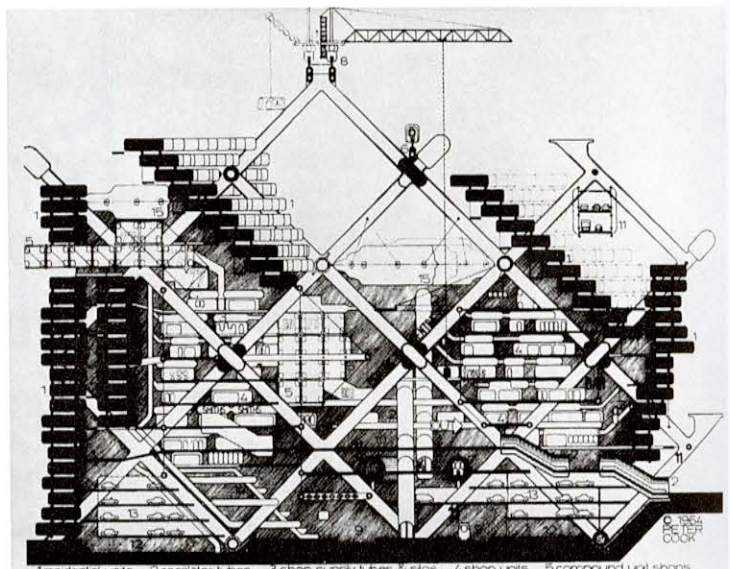
It is significant that the "advanced technology" favored by progressive Modern architecture continues to be even today that of mass production and industrialization, nineteenth-century style. Even Archigram's structural visions are Jules Verne versions of the Industrial Revolution with an appliqué of Pop-aerospace terminology.[69] However, the American aerospace industry itself, the chosen model of latter-day architectural megastructuralists, is facing its own trauma of extinction owing to oversize and overspecialization. As Peter Barnes in the New Republic suggests,[17]

From a purely economic standpoint, the aerospace giants have become more of a burden to the nation than an asset. Despite the myriad promises that science holds in store, America does not now need any great new strides forward in technology, at least in the aerospace field. What it needs is breathing space, a chance to evaluate the impact of current technology and to distribute the fruits of progress more equitably. It needs to think small, not big.

According to Barnes, Boeing's Breakthrough project required $7,750 per house unit in site-management costs alone, excluding costs of architectural services or construction.

The relevant revolution today is the current electronic one. Architecturally, the symbol systems that electronics purveys so well are more important than its engineering content. The most urgent technological problem facing us is the humane meshing of advanced scientific and technical systems with our imperfect and exploited human systems, a problem worthy of the best attention of architecture's scientific ideologues and visionaries.

For us the most boring pavilions at Expo '67 were those that corresponded to the progressive structures of nineteenth-century world's fairs celebrated by Sigfried Giedion; while the Czech Pavilion — an architectural and structural nonentity, but tatooed with symbols and moving pictures — was by far the most interesting. It also had the longest lines of spectators; the show, not the building, drew the crowd. The Czech Pavilion was almost a decorated shed.


1 residential units 2 escalator tubes 3 shop supply tubes & silos 4 shop units 5 compound unit shops
6 fast monorail 7 local monorail 8 craneway 9 heavy duty railway 10 maximum circulation area
11 fast road 12 local feeder road 13 local parking 14 local goods sorting 15 environment seal balcon
© 1964 PETER COOK

69. "Plug-in City," 1964; Peter Cook

17. Peter Barnes, "Aerospace Dinosaurs," The New Republic, Washington, D. C. (March 27, 1971), p. 19.

Preindustrial Imagery for a Postindustrial Era

A language of preindustrial forms has complemented that of industrial forms in late Modern architecture. Le Corbusier's early sketches of Mediterranean villages probably initiated the preoccupation of Modern architects and theorists with vernacular, indigenous, or anonymous architecture. The simple, planar geometry of white Mediterranean forms appealed to the Cubist-Purist aesthetic of the young Le Corbusier, and their bold, rude plasticity was transformed into the béton brut of his late work. Then béton brut became a style — the style after the post-Miesian reaction against frame and panel architecture, with a vocabulary of forms, not to mention an explicit system of proportions, the Modulor, as precise as those of the Renaissance orders.

Architects who have adapted the forms of Latourette for heroic symbolic purposes far removed from their original meaning, in using them in precast units, brick and baked enamel, from the industrial parks of New Jersey to the architectural monuments of Tokyo, have also harked back to the Mediterranean craftsman's vernacular that inspired Latourette. Vernacular models are popular where advanced technology is, even for Modern architects, farfetched, that is, for individual houses in the suburbs. The acceptance of primitive vernacular architecture has let in traditional architecture by the back door in the name of "regionalism." Today even traditional American shed roofs and boards-and-battens are accepted and replace the flat roofs and imitation concrete that architects strove for and clients resisted in suburbia.

What architects now call anonymous architecture comes close to what we are calling Ordinary architecture, but it is not the same because it eschews symbolism and style. While architects have adapted the simple forms of vernacular architecture, they have largely ignored the complex symbolism behind them. They themselves have used the vernacular vocabularies symbolically, to suggest association with the past and simple, deterministic virtue, that is, as early examples of a correspondence between structural methods, social organization, and environmental influences, paralleling at a primitive level the benign processes that shape the industrial vernacular. Yet, ironically, architects — except for Aldo van Eyck in Africa and Gunther Nitschke in Japan — have discounted the symbolic values that shape these forms and dominate, so anthropologists tell us, the artifactual environment of primitive cultures, often contradicting function and structure in their influence on form.

From Latourette to Levittown

It is a further irony that Modern architects, who can embrace vernacular architecture remote in place or time, can contemptuously reject the current vernacular of the United States, that is, the merchant builders' vernacular of Levittown and the commercial vernacular of Route 66. This aversion to the conventional building around us could be an exotic survival of nineteenth-century Romanticism, but we think it is merely that architects are able to discern the symbolism in the forms of their own vernacular; they are unable to discern, either through ignorance or detachment, the symbolism of Mykonos or the Dogon. They understand the symbolism of Levittown and do not like it, and they are not prepared to suspend judgment on it in order to learn and, by learning, to make subsequent judgment more sensitive.[70] The content of commercial hucksterism and middle-middle-class social aspiration is so distasteful to them that they are unable either to investigate open-mindedly the basis for the symbolism or to analyze the forms for their functional value; indeed they find it difficult to concede that any "liberal" architect could do so.[18]

Architects who find middle-middle-class social aspirations distasteful and like uncluttered architectural form see only too well the symbolism in the suburban residential landscape — for instance, in its stylish "bi-levels" in the Regency, Williamsburg, New Orleans, French Provincial, or Prairie-Organic modes, and its ornamented ranchers with carriage lanterns, mansards, and antiqued brick. They recognize the symbolism, but they do not accept it. To them the symbolic decoration of the split-level suburban sheds represents the debased, materialistic values of a consumer economy where people are brainwashed by mass marketing and have no choice but to move into the ticky-tacky, with its vulgar violations of the nature of materials and its visual pollution of architectural sensibilities, and surely, therefore, the ecology.

This viewpoint throws out the variety with the vulgarity. In dismissing the architectural value of the Strip, it discounts also its simple and commonsense functional organization, which meets the needs of our sensibilities in an automobile environment of big spaces and fast movement, including the need for explicit and heightened symbolism. Similarly, in surburbia, the eclectic ornament on and around each of the relatively small houses reaches out to you visually across the relatively big lawns and makes an impact that pure architectural articulation could never make, at least in time, before you have passed on to the next house. The lawn sculpture partway between the house and the curving curb acts as a visual booster within this space, linking the symbolic architecture to the moving vehicle. So sculptural jockeys, carriage lamps, wagon wheels, fancy house numbers, fragments of split-rail fences, and mailboxes on erect chains all have a spatial as well as a symbolic role. Their forms identify vast space as do the urns in Le Notre's parterres, the ruined temples in English parks, and the sign in the A&P parking lot.[71]

But the symbolic meanings of the forms in builder's vernacular also serve to identify and support the individualism of the owner. The occupant of an

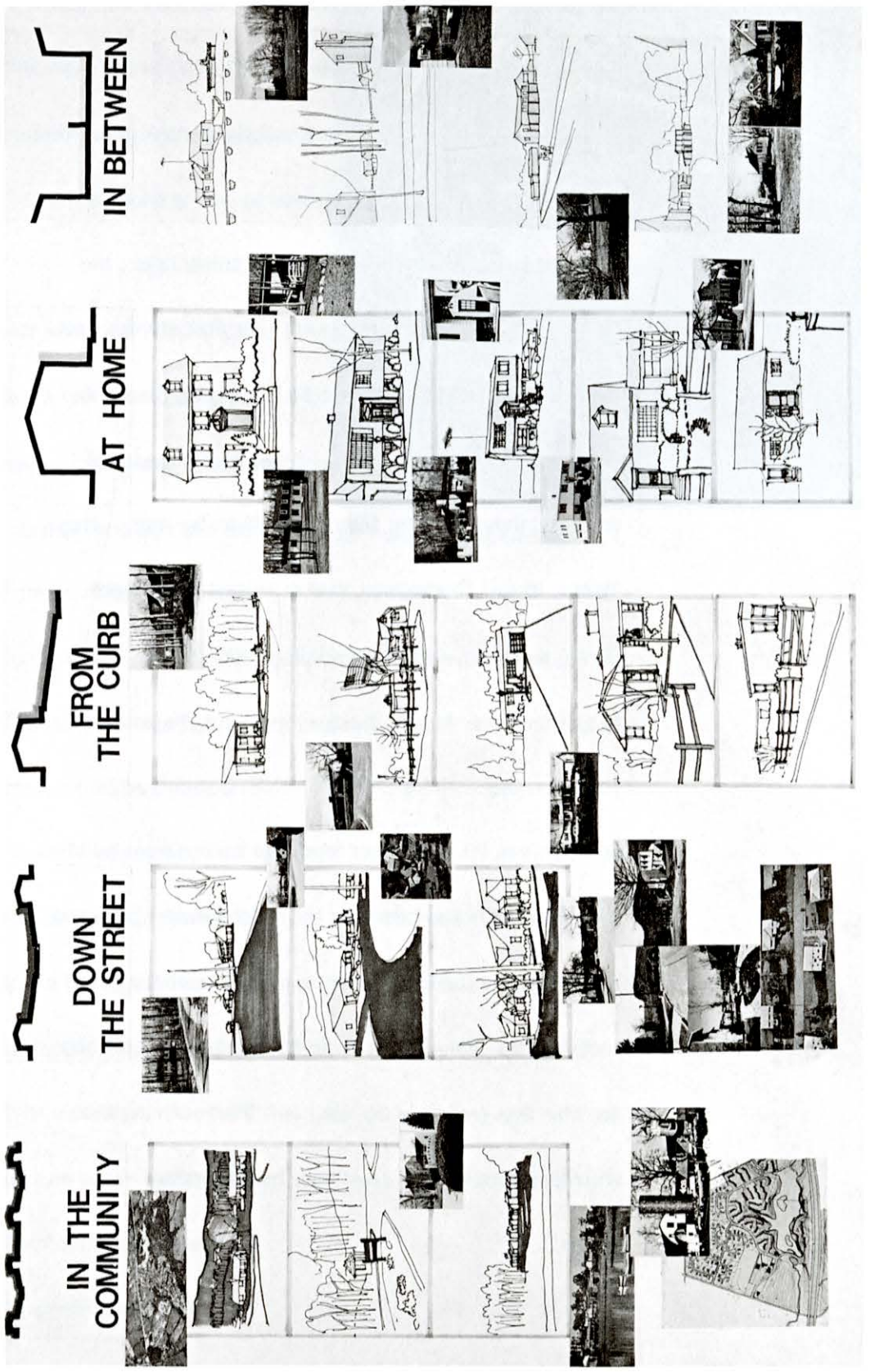
18. This, perhaps, accounts for the fact that we have been called "Nixonites," "Reaganites," or the equivalent, by Roger Montgomery, Ulrich Franzen, Kenneth Frampton, and a whole graduating class of Cooper Union.

anonymous vernacular tenement on an Italian medieval street could achieve identity through decoration on his front door – or perhaps through the bella figura of his clothing – within the scale of his spatially limited, foot-going community. The same held for families behind the unified facades of Nash's London terraces. But for the middle-class suburbanite living, not in an antebellum mansion, but in a smaller version lost in a large space, identity must come through symbolic treatment of the form of the house, either through styling provided by the developer (for instance, split-level Colonial) or through a variety of symbolic ornaments applied thereafter by the owner (the Rococo lamp in the picture window or the wagon wheel out front).

The criticis of suburban iconography attribute its infinite combinations of standard ornamental elements to clutter rather than variety. This can be dismissed by suburbia's connoisseurs as the insensitivity of the uninitiate. To call these artifacts of our culture crude is to be mistaken concerning scale. It is like condemning theater sets for being crude at five feet or condemning plaster putti, made to be seen high above a Baroque cornice, for lacking the refinements of a Mino da Faesole bas-relief on a Renaissance tomb. Also, the boldness of the suburban doodads distracts the eye from the telephone poles that even the silent majority does not like.

72. Developer's house with applied symbols

70. Precedents of Suburban Symbols, "Learning from Levittown," Yale, 1970



71. Space, Sprawl, and Imagery, "Learning from Levittown," Yale, 1970

Silent-White-Majority Architecture

Many people like suburbia. This is the compelling reason for learning from Levittown. The ultimate irony is that although Modern architecture from the start has claimed a strong social basis for its philosophy, Modern architects have worked to keep formal and social concerns separate rather than together. In dismissing Levittown, Modern architects, who have characteristically promoted the role of the social sciences in architecture, reject whole sets of dominant social patterns because they do not like the architectural consequences of these patterns. Conversely, by defining Levittown as "silent-white-majority" architecture, they reject it again because they do not like what they believe to be the silent white majority's political views. These architects reject the very heterogeneity of our society that makes the social sciences relevant to architecture in the first place. As Experts with Ideals, who pay lip service to the social sciences, they build for Man rather than for men — this means, to suit themselves, that is, to suit their own particular upper-middle-class values, which they assign to all mankind. Most suburbanites reject the limited formal vocabularies architects' values promote, or accept them 20 years later modified by the tract builder: The Usonian house becomes the ranch house. Only the very poor, via public housing, are dominated by architects' values. Developers build for markets rather than for Man and probably do less harm than authoritarian architects would do if they had the developers' power.

One does not have to agree with hard-hat politics to support the rights of the middle-middle class to their own architectural aesthetics, and we have found that Levittown-type aesthetics are shared by most members of the middle-middle class, black as well as white, liberal as well as conservative. If analyzing suburbia's architecture implies that one has let the Nixon regime "penetrate even the field of architectural criticism,"[19] then the field of urban planning has been infiltrated by Nixonites for more than 10 years — by Abrams, Gans, Webber, Dyckman, and Davidoff. For our critique is nothing new; the social planners have been making it for more than a decade. But in this Nixon-silent-majority critique, especially in its architectural, as opposed to its racial and military, dimensions, there is a fine line between liberalism and old-fashioned class snobbery.

Another obvious point is that "visual pollution" (usually someone else's house or business) is not the same order of phenomenon as air and water pollution. You can like billboards without approving of strip mining in Appalachia. There is no "good" way to pollute land, air, or water. Sprawl and strip we can learn to do well. However, Life magazine, in an editorial entitled "Erasing Grown-Up Vandalism," equates suburban sprawl, billboards, wires, and gasoline stations with the strip mining that has despoiled too much of the country.[20] "Visual pollution" seems to inspire editorial writers and photographers, who view it with alarm, to poetic descriptions of it in the manner of Milton and Doré. Their style is often in direct conflict with their opprobrium. If it is all bad, why is it so inspiring?

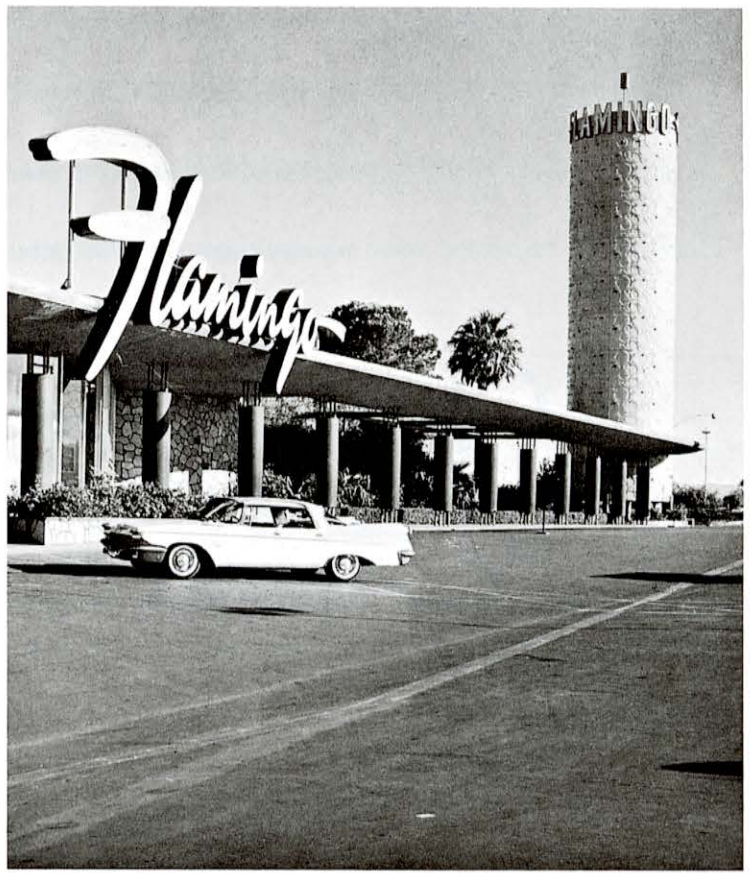
19. Ulrich Franzen, Progressive Architecture, Letter to the Editor (April, 1970), p. 8.

20. Life (April 9, 1971), p. 34. Life's own language is more graphic.

Social Architecture and Symbolism

We architects who hope for a reallocation of national resources toward social purposes must take care to lay emphasis on the purposes and their promotion rather than on the architecture that shelters them. From our experience on South Street, we know that this reorientation will call for ordinary architecture, not ducks. But when there is little money to spend on architecture, greatest architectural imagination is required. Sources for modest buildings and images with social purpose will come, not from the industrial past, but from the everyday city around us, of modest buildings and modest spaces with symbolic appendages.

Meeting the architectural implications and the critical social issues of our era will require that we drop our involuted, architectural expressionism and our mistaken claim to be building outside a formal language and find formal languages suited to our times. These languages will incorporate symbolism and rhetorical appliqué. Revolutionary eras are given to didactic symbolism and to the propagandistic use of architecture to promote revolutionary aims. This is as true for the symbolism of today's ghetto rebuilders (African militant or middle-class conservative) as it was for the Romantic Roman republican symbolism of revolutionary France. Boullé was a propagandist and symbolist as well as a formalist. He saw, as we must see, architecture as symbol in space before form in space. To find our symbolism we must go to the suburban edges of the existing city that are symbolically rather than formalistically attractive and represent the aspirations of almost all, including most ghetto dwellers and most of the silent white majority. Then the archetypal Los Angeles will be our Rome and Las Vegas our Florence; and, like the archetypal grain elevator some generations ago, the Flamingo sign will be the model to shock our sensibilities towards a new architecture.



73. Flamingo Hotel, Las Vegas

Finally, learning from popular culture does not remove the architect from his status in high culture. But it may alter high culture to make it more sympathetic to current needs and issues. Since high culture and its cultists (last year's variety) are powerful in urban renewal and other establishment circles, we feel that people's architecture as the people want it (and not as some architect decides Man needs it) does not stand much chance against urban renewal until it hangs in the academy and therefore is acceptable to the decision makers. Helping this to happen is a not-reprehensible part of the role of the high-design architect; it provides, together with moral subversion through irony and the use of a joke to get to seriousness, the weapons of the artist of nonauthoritarian temperament in a social situation that does not agree with him. The architect becomes a jester.

Irony may be the tool with which to confront and combine values in architecture for a pluralist society and to accommodate the differences in values that arise between the architect and his clients. Social classes rarely come together, but if they can make temporary alliances in the designing and building of multivalued community architecture, a sense of paradox and some irony and wit will be needed on all sides.

Understanding the content of Pop's messages and the way that it is projected does not mean that one need agree with, approve of, or reproduce that content. If the commercial persuasions that flash on the strip are materialistic manipulation and vapid subcommunication,[21] which cleverly appeal to our deeper drives but send them only superficial messages, it does not follow that the architect who learns from their techniques must reproduce the content or the superficiality of their messages. (But he is indebted to them for helping him recognize that Modern architecture too has a content and a vapid one at that.) Just as Lichtenstein has borrowed the techniques and images of the comics to convey satire, sorrow, and irony rather than violent high adventure, so may the architect's high reader suggest sorrow, irony, love, the human condition, happiness, or merely the purpose within, rather than the necessity to buy soap or the possibility of an orgy. On the other hand, the interpretation and evaluation of symbolic content in architecture is an ambiguous process. The didactic symbolism of Chartres may represent to some the subtleties of medieval theology and to others the depths of medieval superstition or manipulation. Manipulation is not the monopoly of crass commercialism. And manipulation works both ways: It serves commercial interests and the billboard lobby, but also, through the intimidating prestige of cultural lobbies and design review boards, it promotes antisign legislation and beautification.

21. Thomas Maldonado, La Speranza Progettuale, Ambiente e Società, Chapter 15, Nuovo Politecnico 35 (Torino: Einaudi, 1970).

SUMMARY

The progressive, technological, vernacular, process-oriented, superficially socially concerned, heroic and original content of Modern architecture has been discussed before by critics and historians. Our point is that this content did not flow inevitably from the solving of functional problems but arose from Modern architects' unexplicated iconographic preferences and was manifest through a language — several languages — of form, and formal languages and associational systems are inevitable and good, becoming tyrannies only when we are unconscious of them. Our other point is that the content of the unacknowledged symbolism of current Modern architecture is silly. We have been designing dead ducks.

We do not know if the time will come for serious architectural oceanographic urbanism, for example, as opposed to the present off-shore posturing of the world futurist architectural visionaries. We suspect that one day it may, though hardly in the forms now envisioned. As practicing architects in the here and now, we do not have much interest in such predictions. We do know, however, that the chief resources of our society go into things with little architectural potential: war, electronic communication, outer space, and, to a much lesser extent, social services. As we have said, this is not the time and ours is not the environment for heroic communication via pure architecture.

When Modern architects righteously abandoned ornament on buildings, they unconsciously designed buildings that were ornament. In promoting Space and Articulation over symbolism and ornament, they distorted the whole building into a duck. They substituted for the innocent and inexpensive practice of applied decoration on a conventional shed the rather cynical and expensive distortion of program and structure to promote a duck; mini-megastructures are mostly ducks. It is now time to reevaluate the once-horrifying statement of John Ruskin that architecture is the decoration of construction, but we should append the warning of Pugin: It is all right to decorate construction but never construct decoration.

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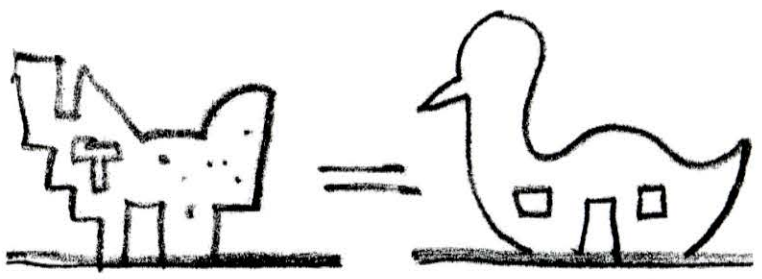

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PART III

ESSAYS IN THE UGLY AND ORDINARY: SOME DECORATED SHEDS

The recent work of Venturi and Rauch parallels the theory of complexity and contradiction among forms and symbols outlined in Part II, but not closely. Practicing architects tend to theorize inductively. They start, not with general propositions to be proved by reality, as might academics, but with the reality itself, in our case with Las Vegas, Levittown, historical architecture, and the immediate problems posed by our jobs. From these sources we derive theories that then temper our next work.

But a building is a building, and a theory is a theory. No artist should go all the way with his own philosophy, translating too literally his theory into his architecture, particularly into any one piece of architecture. That is too dry.

Our descriptions rely on historical analogy, because we use historical models when we design. We unashamedly lift our analogs out of historical context, picking for study perhaps only one aspect of their makeup, to create new comparisons that aid analysis and goad invention. We think this method may not necessarily be right for all architects or for seeing all issues and solving all problems. It is a device commonly used by critics. It seems to bother some architects but few historians.

We concentrate here on image and meaning because they are the subject of this book. We do not ignore the program and structure of buildings: In our office we spend, as do most architects, probably 90 percent of our time on these problems.

The work covered here is that initiated since the publication of Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture. The dates in the headings refer to the year the design was made or initiated. The names listed with each project are those members of our firm (apart from Robert Venturi and John Rauch) who have been most important in the design of the project.

Fire Station No. 4, Columbus, Indiana, 1965
(partner in charge, Gerod Clark)

The building committee for Fire Station No. 4 requested an ordinary building, easy to maintain, and without, for instance, butterfly roofs with leaking clerestories. Some wanted their fire station to look like a house, some like a fire station.

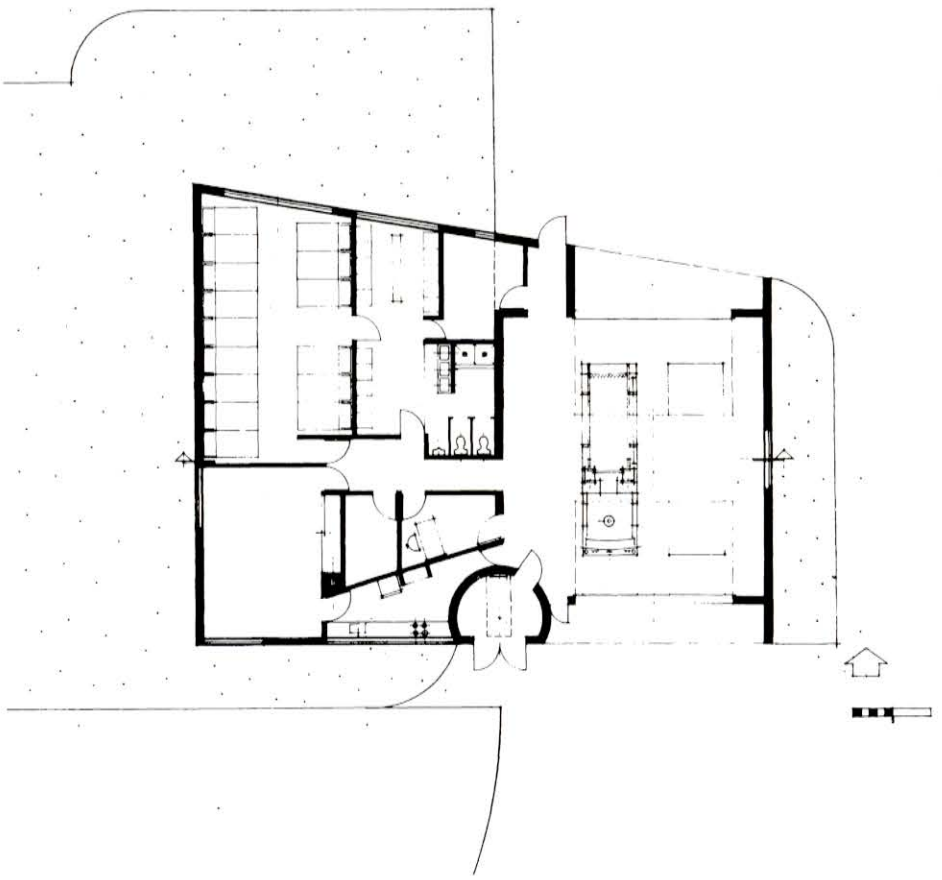
The plan is simple: an almost equal duality between apparatus room on the right and storage-living quarters on the left with a hose-drying tower in the center of the front. Because the dormitory is lower than the apparatus room, we applied a parapet to the facade on its side in order to simplify the front and enchance the scale. The resultant facade is squat like that of an A&P; therefore we changed its proportion to suit our taste by applying a new facade, a pattern of white-glazed brick on the plain red brick of the real facade. The white brick, the gold-leaf lettering at the top of the tower identifying FIRE STATION NO. 4, the tower itself, and the big flagpole in the middle of the front lawn are symbolic decoration on an ordinary shed. The foundation planting, which is perhaps too ordinary, is not our design.

Where this little building looks ordinary, it symbolizes its practical function and standard program. Where it is ornamented, it imposes a civic scale on the prosaic bulk and symbolizes a civic function in the vast space by the side of the road against the rhythmic foreground of utlity poles. This is what we call "second-glance" architecture. But the symbolism of the ordinary was perhaps too subtle for an architect who wrote to Progressive Architecture (January 1969):

Dear Editor: Last week, I read with interest your article in the November 1968 P/A concerning a fire station in Columbus, Indiana. By coincidence, I passed through Columbus this very weekend and saw the building first hand.

Permit me to congratulate the architects. They have succeeded in making this building conform to its surroundings. One can scarcely distinguish it from barber shops, garages, and delicatessens in the same vicinity. They certainly have concealed the fact that an architect had anything to do with it.

I must congratulate you also for selecting such pedestrian buildings to publish. It has bolstered my ego considerably.
Donald J. Richards
Chicago, Ill.



1. Plan

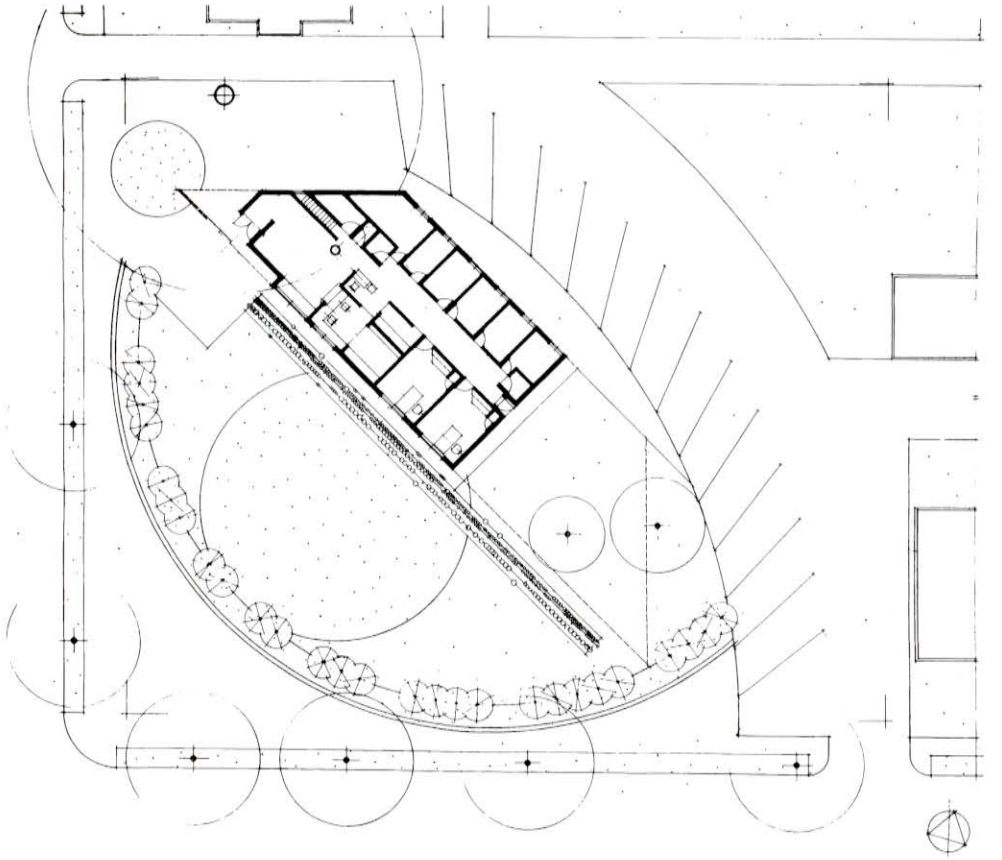
2

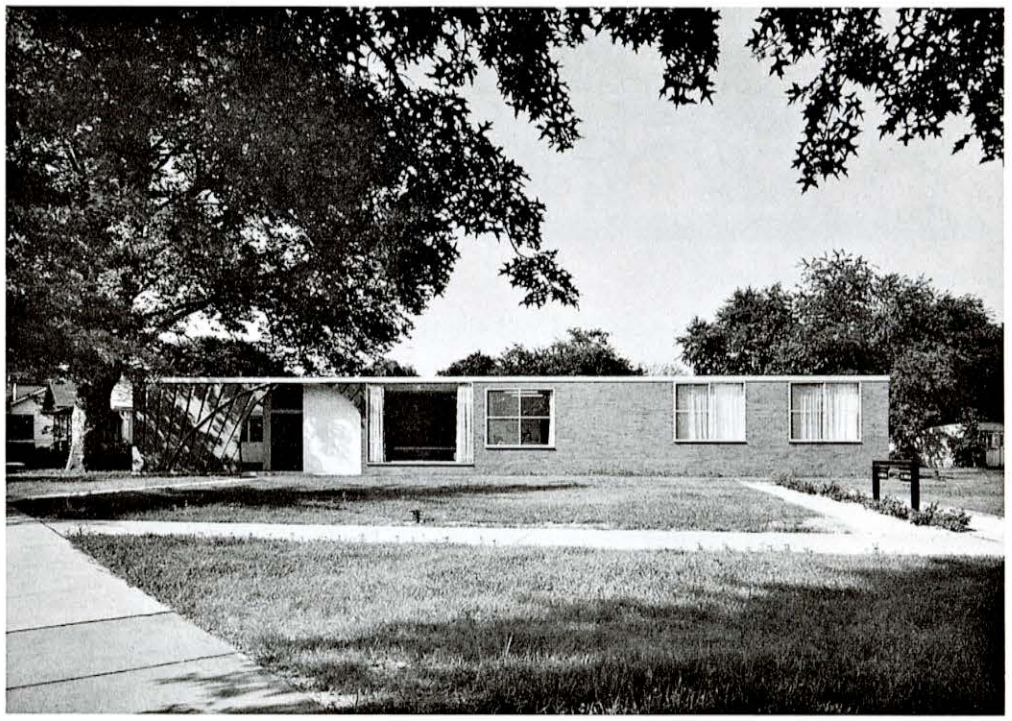
3

Varga-Brigio Medical Office Building, Bridgeton, New Jersey, 1965
(with the assistance of Gerod Clark)

This is a doctors' office in a small town, a decorated shed suitable for a corner site and capable of expansion. Its diagonal position accommodates the corner site, leaving a front lawn on both streets; it has a pointed end that can be repeated at the other end after expansion. This relates the diagonal building to the rest of the architecture that is "plopped" in the neighborhood.

This little shed's big, conventional elements and decorated entrance were an attempt at monumentality. The windows are standard 6-foot 8-inch sliding doors, set on 3-foot sills; a large-scale wood trellis, painted red to match the brick, radiates from an arched opening squeezed into the facade. The building as a whole is carefully ordinary; the one arty amenity is applied to the entrance. It has been likened to a little factory that has rented space to a Chinese restaurant.





4. Plan

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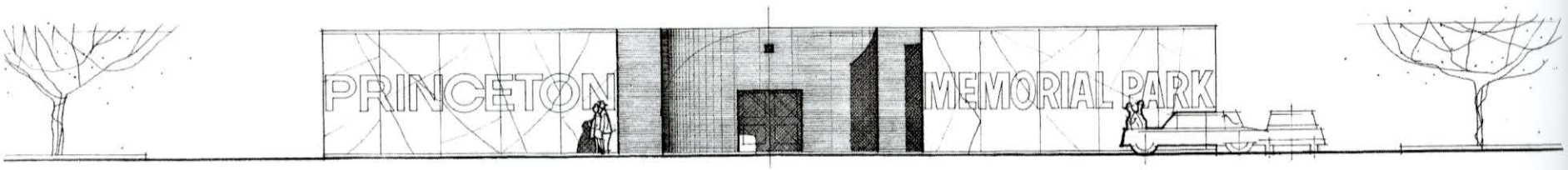
Three Buildings for Princeton Memorial Park, Hightstown, New Jersey, 1966
(in association with Richard J. Cripps, landscape architect, with the assistance of Frank Kawasaki)

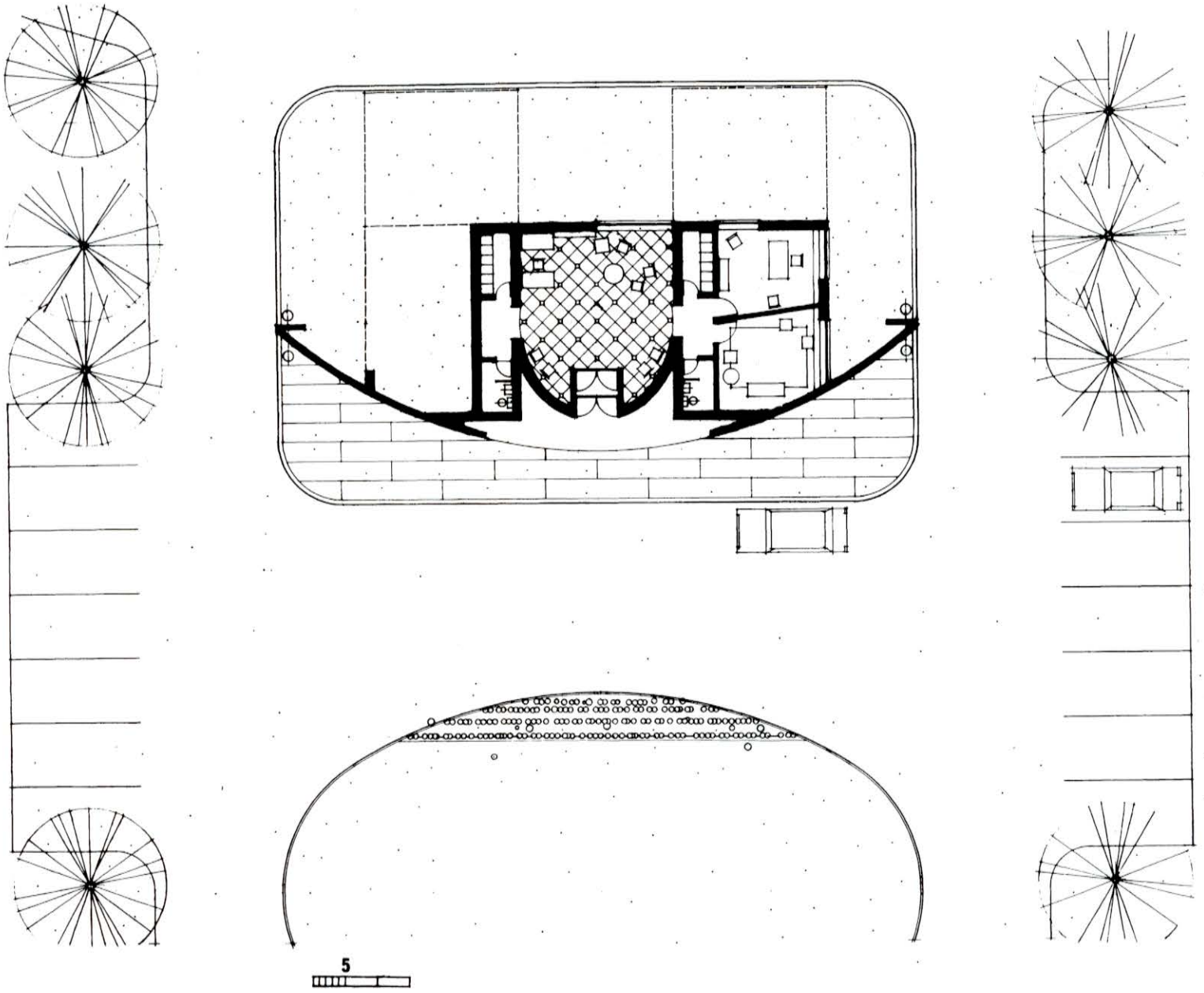
Princeton Memorial Park is a cemetery without individual monuments. It sits by the side of the New Jersey Turnpike. We designed ducks for this project because of its civic-cum-commercial nature. The entrance building is on a local rural road between the entrance drive on the right and the exit on the left. From the front it is a masonry sign that identifies the place and is curved to be seen from cars approaching parallel to its face. Part of the sign is a false facade, because the administrative and sales offices behind the sign are very small. These offices can be added to later without changing the front. The details around the entrance show that the building and the front are separate architecturally though attached physically.

The designs for the chapel are very preliminary. They propose a series of parallel walls perpendicular to the axis toward the altar. Varying-sized arches are cut into them to shape the interior space. Light enters between the planes. Outside, the planes are faced with black and white marble creating a duality.

The tower is a sign to be seen from the expressway yet to be interesting from close up. Its precedents are the campanile and the commercial sign by the highway. From the highway you see the bold silhouette of the concrete cylinder, and through the openings in the cylinder you see a structural diagonal diaphragm with an appliqué of black and white marble whose op-scaled stripes are like those of the tower at Siena. Inscribed in concrete on the back of the diaphragm sloping toward the viewer is the Twenty-third Psalm, which is seen through a sheet of water. At night the tower is lighted internally to be read from a distance, and it becomes a base for a tall beacon of light.

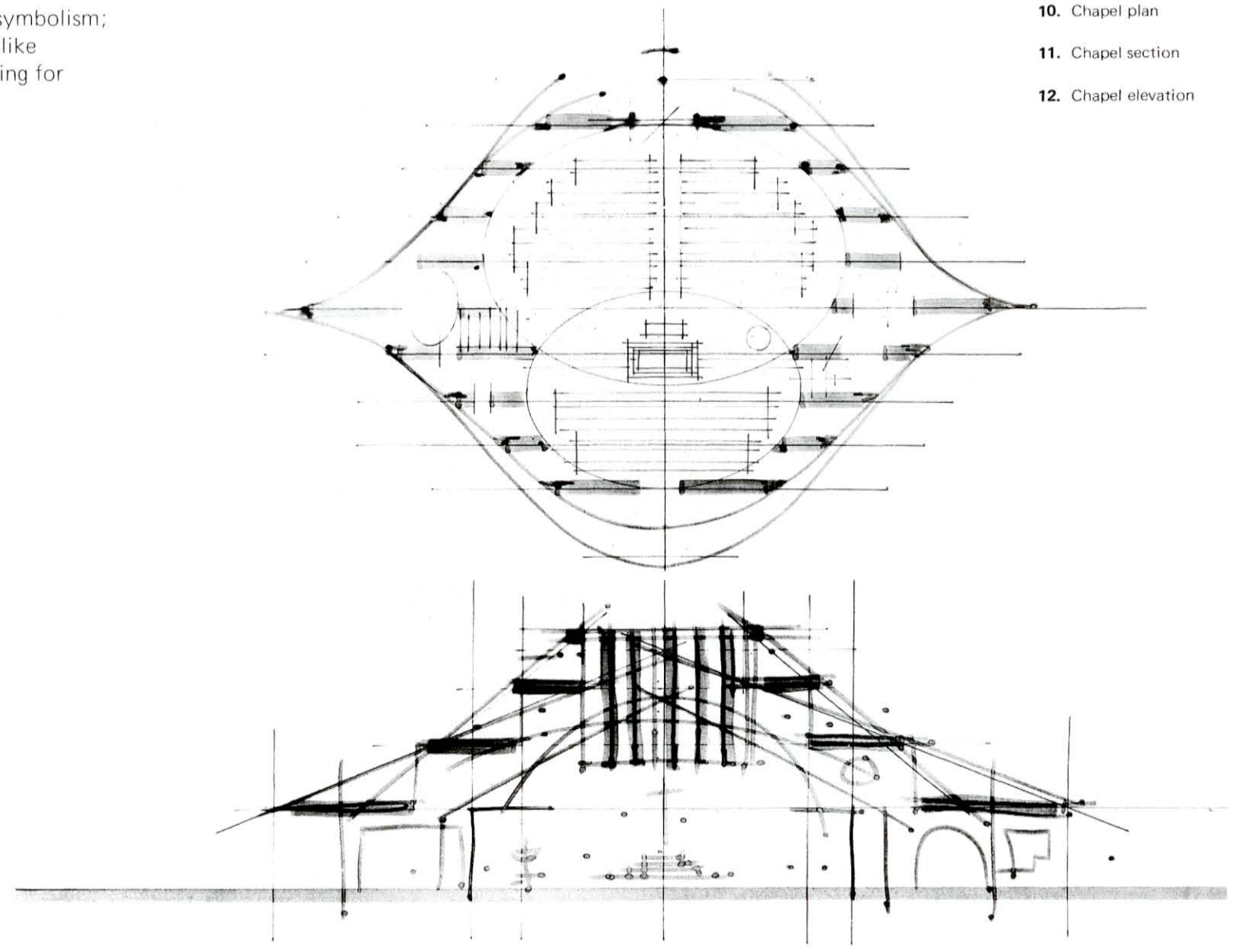


7. Entrance building elevation



8. Entrance building plan

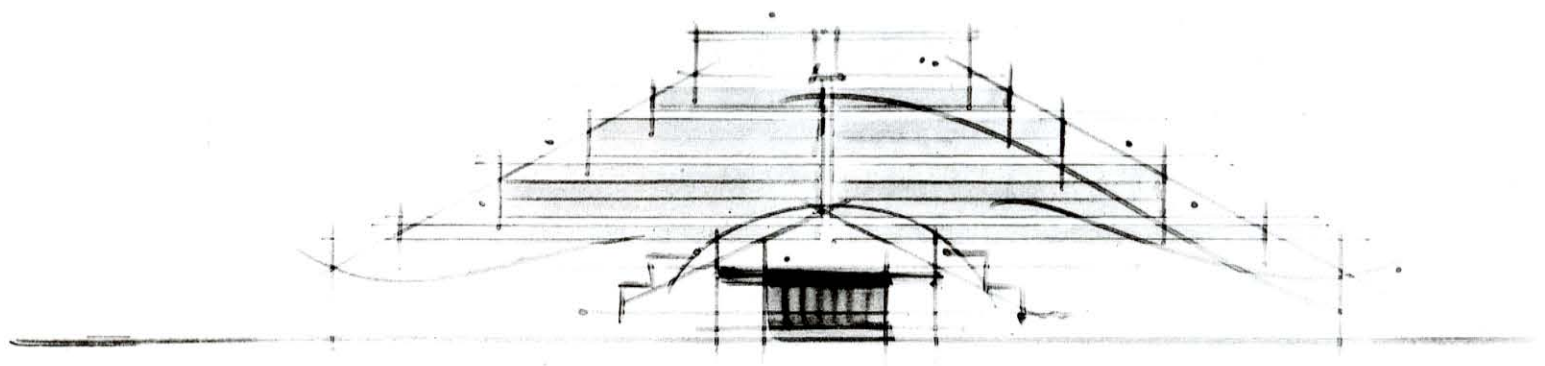
The clients did not like our symbolism; they wanted Colonial ducks like those at Rossmore, the housing for the elderly nearby.



10. Chapel plan

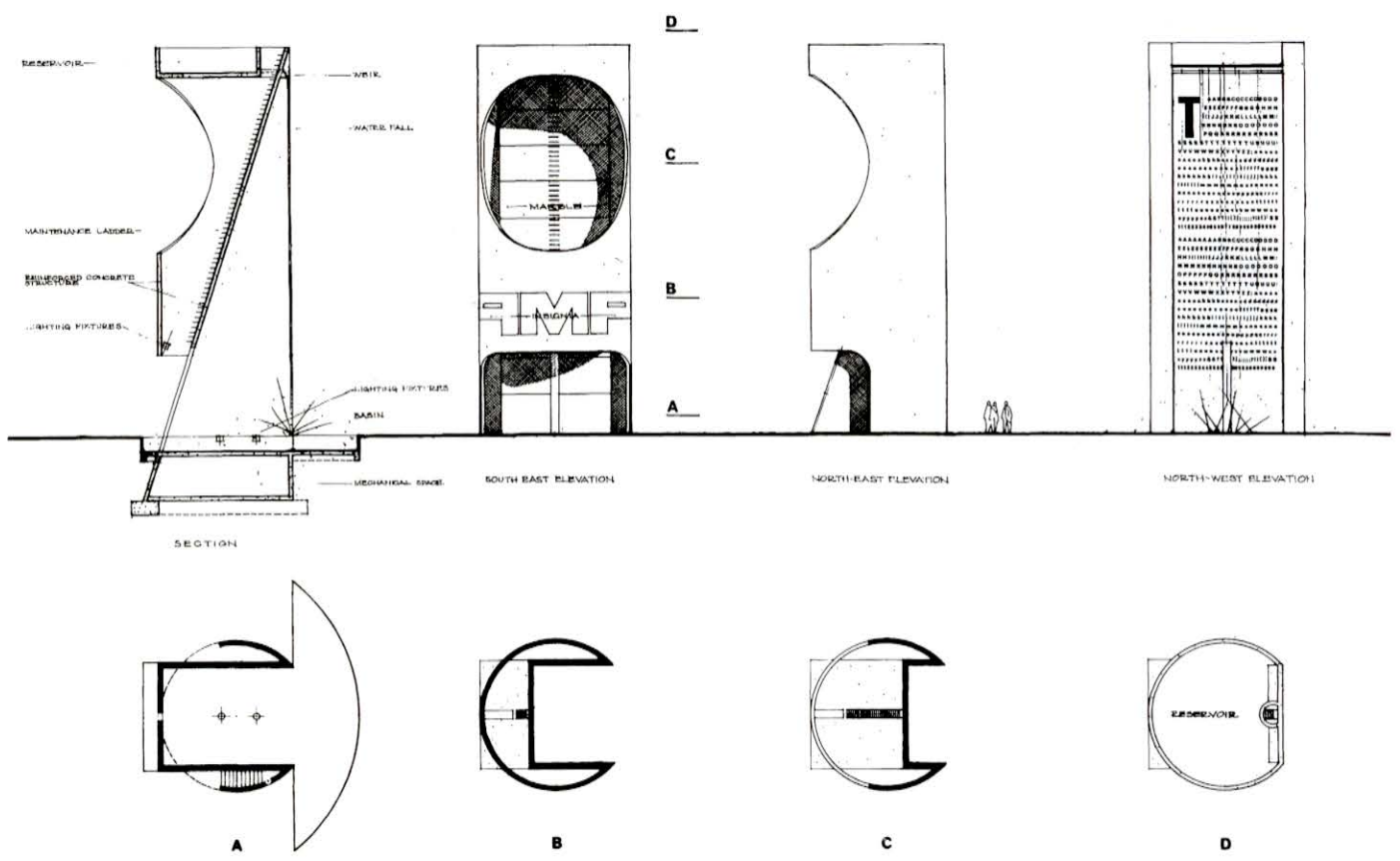
11. Chapel section

12. Chapel elevation



13. Tower, plans, section, elevations

9



A Bill-Ding-Board for the National Football Hall of Fame Competition, 1967
(with the assistance of Gerod Clark)

The following description is taken from our article in Architectural Forum, April 1968.

Most of the competitions our office has entered have had something in common: They were hybrids. Our scheme for the F.D.R. Memorial was architecture and landscape; our fountain for the Philadelphia Fairmount Park Commission was architecture and sculpture; our design for Copley Plaza, architecture and urban design. Our submission for the National Football Hall of Fame Competition is a building and a billboard.

The program for this competition was restrictive in the maximum cubage permitted, in the precise and elaborate relationship stipulated for administrative, research, library, and dining facilities, and in the requirement for banqueting 1,000 people within the exhibition spaces. But it was unrestrictive concerning the main function of the building as a museum for the masses and concerning methods of exhibition.

The unique characteristics of the program, the displays and their content, were based on the policies of the sponsor, the National Football Foundation. The Hall of Fame was described by its president in the program literature as

an Ideological Center, serving our social and education structure and our competitive economy — to the end the power of decision is kept with the people. Honoring [football heroes] . . . brings into focus, at a time of the long hair, beard, beatnik revolt on the campus, the conviction of the Foundation that the disciplines of football make it the biggest and best classroom in the nation for teaching leadership.

The structure of the organization to be reflected in the displays was particularly interesting to us. The program stated:

The Hall of Fame is devoted to the players who have been elected to its ranks (some 150 are presently included; five or six elected every year); the coaches who have been elected (some 50 with one or none added annually to the ranks); The Men Who Made The Game (Walter Camp, Alonzo Stagg, William Heffelfinger, and others); The Gold Medal Winners, men who symbolize in the nation the qualities that are inherent in football (one is elected yearly; Eisenhower, MacArthur, Hoover, Kennedy, Whizzer White, Stagg, Lourie, Trippe, and Roger Blough have thus far received the Gold Medal); The Scholar Athletes, college seniors (of whom 75 have been elected so far, and another nine to 11 are picked yearly); and the MacArthur Bowl, an annual award of major significance to a great team. The Gold Medal Winners and the players elected to the National Football Hall of Fame are the most important groups to dramatize. . . .

After this description of a hierarchical order — recalling to us the subtle rankings of the beatified and canonized in the medieval Kingdom of Heaven — suggestions were elaborated for displays, which included relics [sic] of football history reminiscent again of medieval theology.

The basis for our design is accommodating the relic on one hand and the wide-screen on the other; Knute Rockne's sweater displayed in a little case and his forward pass projected on a big surface — to satisfy the individual's thirst for the immediacy of the real thing and to absorb the masses' attention through changing illusion. The one involves extensive detail, the other simple impact.

Our original idea was to make the building in the shape of a football. But we made a sign instead of a sculpture: an essentially two-dimensional billboard, big in size but economical in cubage, which is also a building: a "bill-ding-board." Our mixed media include symbolic and representational elements, that is, billboards and words, along with the abstract elements of space, form, and structure: symbols with architecture to enrich meaning. They can evoke the instant associations crucial for today's vast spaces, vast speeds, complex programs, and, perhaps, jaded senses that respond only to bold stimuli.

The front of our building, which is billboard, inflects toward the big parking spaces and the stadium. The back, which is building, relates to the exhibition field in the rear and, in fact, turns, like Aalto's Otaniemi Institute, into a quasi-grandstand. The enormous billboard, 100 feet high and 210 feet long, needs buttressing in the back. These buttresses integrate the building with the sign. Parts of the interior display are niches – static spaces along a long gallery: These fall within the buttresses as do the chapels along the nave in a Gothic cathedral. Outside, the billboard, which is several feet thick, is backed by maintenance catwalks that interlace with the buttresses. The giant screen has the approximate proportions of a football field. On it, 200,000 electronically programmed lights produce moving sequences of naturalistic images, words and phrases, and diagrammatic choreographies of famous football plays. These displays can be viewed from the parking lots, the picnic green in front, and the Rutgers stadium, which is beyond.

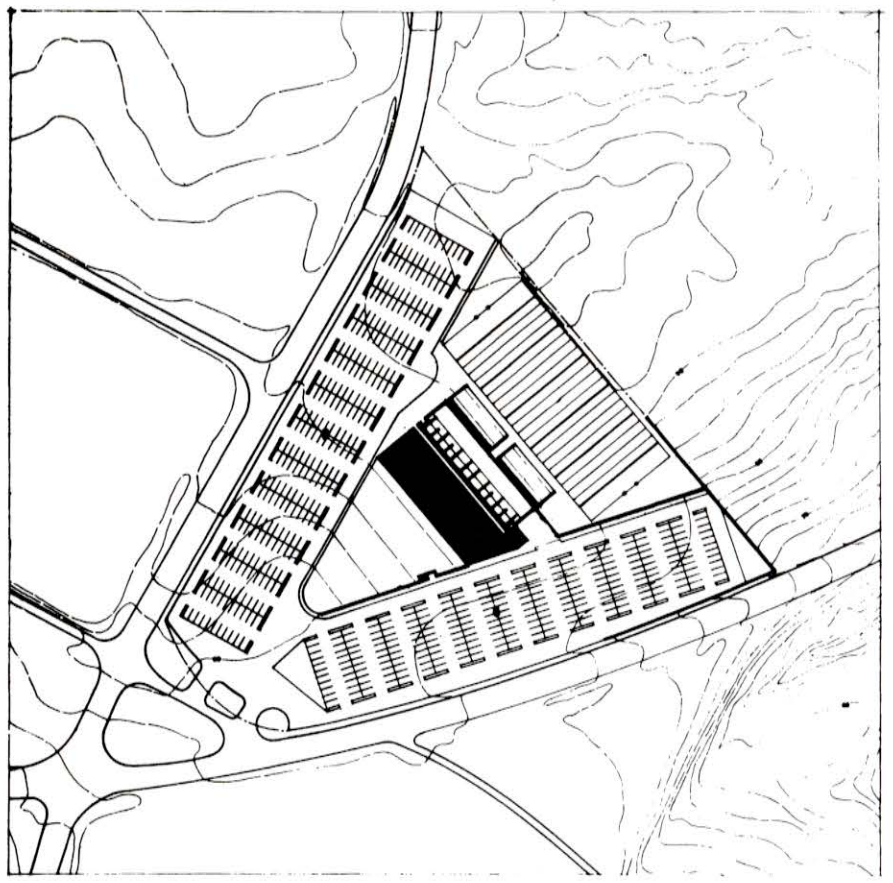
From nearby, the billboard corresponds to the largely false west facade of a Gothic cathedral, especially an Italian one like Orvieto, teeming with glittering mosaics and niched statues, whose main function is to communicate information toward the piazza. From a distance the analogy with the billboard on the highway is obvious. Immediately in front of the screen, where the seats are bad at a movie, is a moat. Below the screen are various ways to enter the building.

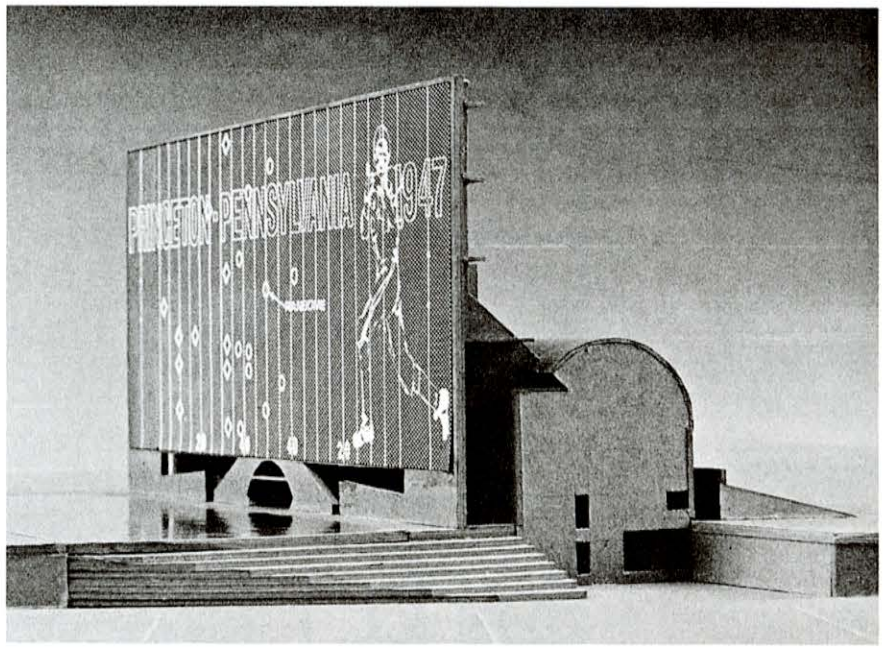
Two symmetrical ramps from the parking lots lead to a single, hidden entrance at the center of the facade. They ape the monumentality of the double, symmetrical stairways, which approach the door of a terraced, Baroque villa. The big, low spans of the ramp openings in front increase the monumentality. But narrow stairways at the center eat out of the ramps and superimpose sharper diagonals upon them. Below, at ground level, an opening goes through the building to the field beyond and contains doors to non-public areas on the ground floor. The shape of this opening is a partial football.

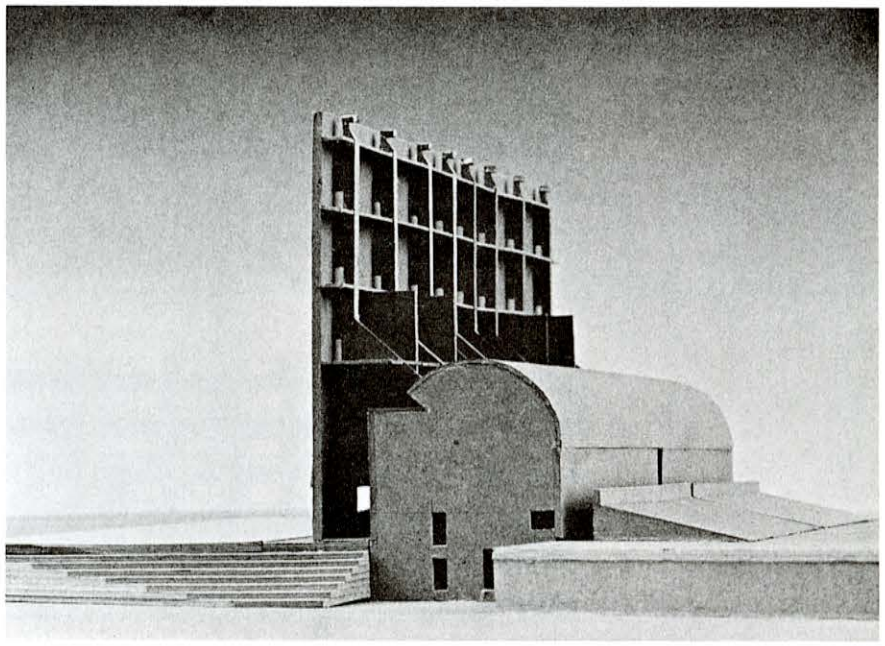
There are contradictions in the facade of the bill-ding-board. The top, which is mostly billboard and is mostly seen from afar, is scaleless, perhaps more so than a real billboard, because it is bigger than usual and of slightly different proportions: You might not be sure how big it is or how far away it is. A little ominous, perhaps.

But the bottom, which is mostly building and is seen closer up, is less ambiguous in scale. Its combination of contrasting ramps and stairs suggests a human scale. The top, with its commercial associations, is not monumental despite its size; the bottom, through its symmetrical form as well as its associations (with the central building of the Campidoglio, for instance), is almost pompously monumental. The focus of ramps and stairs and a hidden door in turn reinforce the ambiguous scale. The top, the billboard, is a consistently flat surface, but the bottom is violently punctured with big openings containing deep shadows. The lower entrance is a positive and symbolic shape, while the others are negative, residual shapes resulting from the diagonal ramps and stairs at the bottom and the boundary of the sign on top.

The flat, high easel of the front elevation contrasts with the busy profiles of the side elevations. This disunity as the building turns the corner relects the contradiction between the front and the back, between the behind-the-scenes mess, including the semi-exposed buttresses, which support the facadism of the front, and the front itself.







14. Site plan

15

16

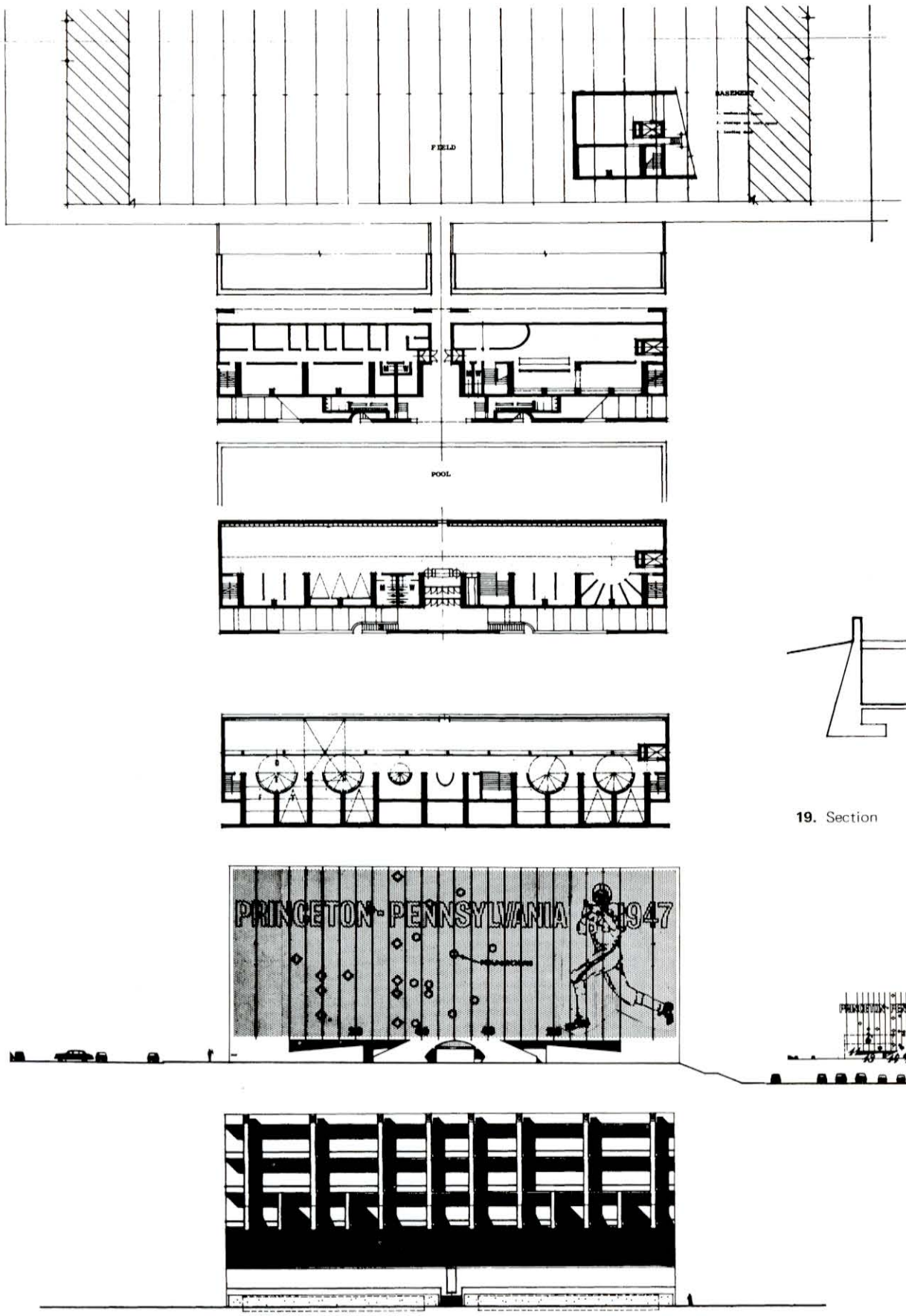
A similar tension occurs in a Gothic cathedral between the inside and the outside: From the inside you are "fooled" because the unseen buttresses outside make the spindling, vaulted nave seem magically light. Our side elevations are essentially cross sections of the interior and therefore correspond to orthodox Modern practice, where design proceeds "from within outward." They imply, since the building is merely cut off at each end, an open-ended system along the long axis. If the architecture in-between becomes a pictorial easel toward the front, it becomes earth sculpture at the back to accommodate the abortive grandstands that face the field.

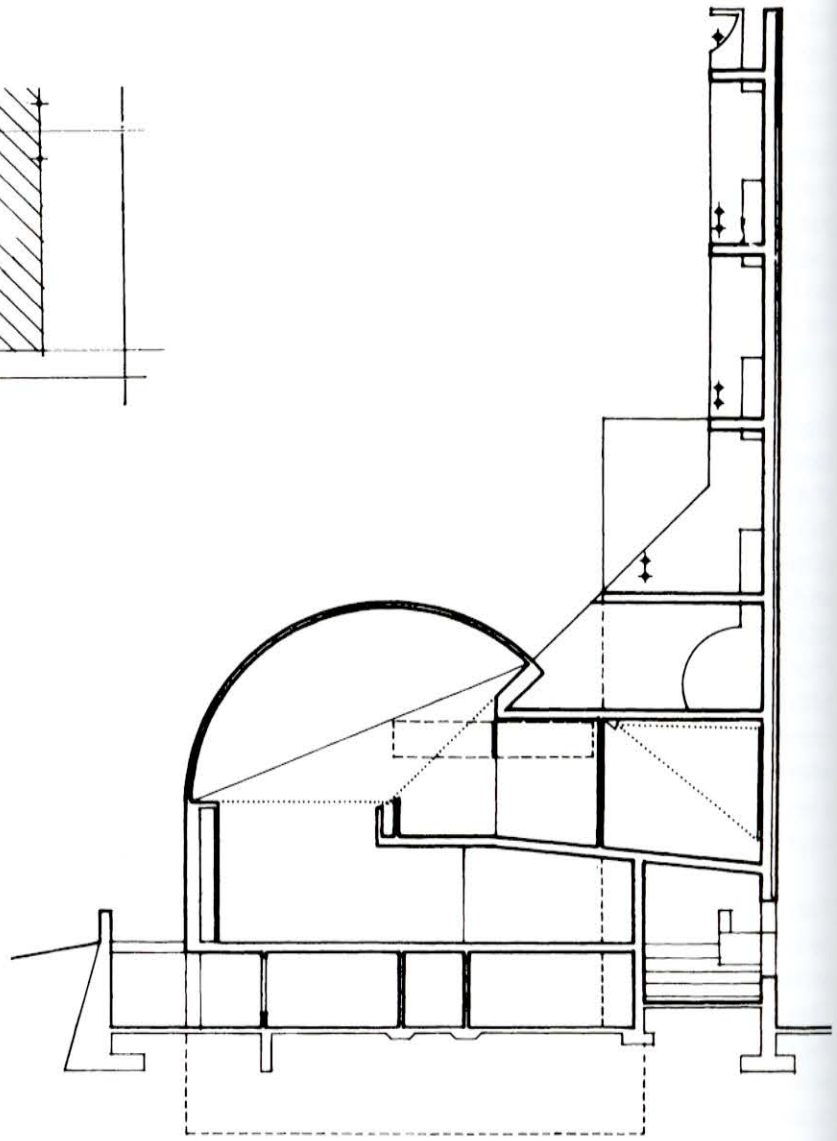
The main floor of the building contains three zones parallel with the front. In the first zone are the outside ramps and auxiliary stairs that approach the entrance. Because they are contained within the perimeter of the building, they appear uneasily big in juxtaposition with the other, interior elements. Like the ramps in the Villa Savoye, they are outside scale inside. Flying buttresses span this zone, and sometimes rooms within buttresses bridge it at the balcony level, modifying the degree of top light.

The second and third zones interact closely in plan. The second zone, the niches between the buttresses along the gallery, resembles the chapels between the buttresses along the nave. This contains the services and all the vertical circulation except the elevator. The spacing and therefore the rhythm of the buttresses varies slightly to accommodate specific functions.

17. Plans

18. Elevations



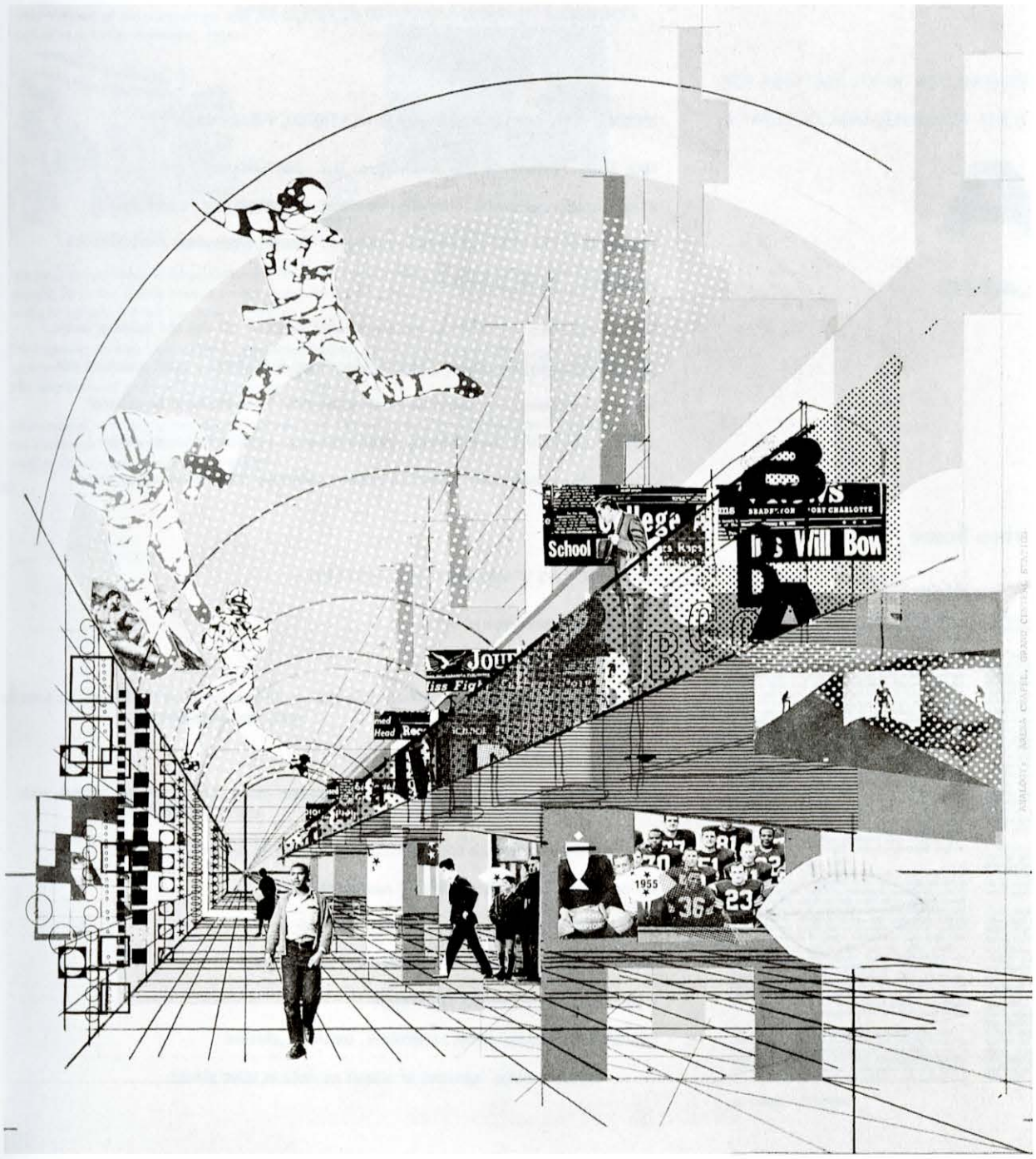


19. Section

The constant, vaulted space of the gallery is perhaps like that in Tintoretto's Finding of the Body of St. Mark, where the quality of light is all that varies along the exaggerated length. But the directional pull of our long gallery is contradicted by the cross axes of its niches. Its balcony almost fills it up, and its even lighting is bisected by a solitary shaft of light from a narrow window directly opposite the entrance, which permits the sole glimpse of the practice field beyond. The ceiling is vaulted to act as a screen for continuous and huge movie projections from the parapet of the balcony, as shown in the section. The figure of Adam from the Sistine ceiling is inserted among the flying football players in our collage to suggest the qualities, both spatial and iconographic, of a ceiling fresco, but the simulated movement of the dynamic angels of a Baroque ceiling might better parallel the real movement of our reflected images of charging players.

A mosaic of rear-projecting screens complements the niches on the opposite wall of the gallery. This continuous bank of images is programmed by computer like the diapolycran of the Czech Pavilion. Used as individual screens or in larger ensembles, it could be an extensive source of detailed material on members of the Hall of Fame and Gold Medal winners. It represents a smaller-scaled, two-dimensional version of the spatial niches opposite: a triptych screen, perhaps, in comparison with the aedicular portal in medieval architecture.

Revolving panels flip mechanically from the niches in the balcony like those in Grand Central Terminal and generate further movement to complement the cinematic reflections on most other surfaces. We forgot to mention the movies on the sides of the balcony parapet. Movies, in fact, are almost all over. They spill over the surfaces, essentially independent of the architectural forms they smother; like Giotto's frescoes in the Arena Chapel, or the rocaille ornament that indiscriminately suffuses walls, fixtures, and furnishings in a Rococo interior; or the ubiquitous and independent patterns on the tattooed man in the circus, or the camouflage patterns on a military tank, whose purpose, significantly, is to render its surfaces ambiguous. The message dominates the space.



Submission for the Rice University Design Fete, 1967: Mini-Structures for Mixed Media

This study was sponsored by the Educational Facilities Laboratories, Inc., and developed during a ten-day charette with students from Rice, Harvard, and Columbia universities, including Phil Belanger, Paul Farmer, Albert Filoni, Harry Guffee, Danny Samuels, and Marvin Rosenman.

We tried to accommodate in the low-density, automobile environment of urban sprawl the diversity of experience and richness of imagery of dense pedestrian environments of old cities. We thought especially of children as they go to school; we thought that today the whole environment should be considered a school.

This was not a visionary attempt to promote a superarchitectural environment, an educational megastructure, or to promote a technocratic revolution, an electronic system of communication that makes architectural place obsolete. It was a preliminary investigation into using highly developed methods of roadside commercial persuasion for didactic and cultural communication at a civic scale — for urban teaching rather than, or as well as, for urban advertising — billboards with a different content.

PROPOSED

We accepted the proposed educational program of Media

MEDIA

MARYLAND

MINI-STRUCTURES FOR MIXED

The Child in the City:

Urbanity and the Urban Scene

A. E. Parr

A brief recollection of certain urban experiences of a child born when the century was born

Until I reached the age of five we lived a short commuter distance outside of a town of about 75,000 on the west coast of Norway. Not as a chore, but as an eagerly desired pleasure, I was fairly regularly entrusted with the task of buying fish and bringing it home alone. This involved the following: walking to the station in five to ten minutes; buying ticket; watching train with coal-burning steam locomotive pull in; boarding train; riding across long bridge over shallows separating small-boat harbor (on the right) from ship's harbor (on the left), including small naval base with torpedo boats; continuing through a tunnel; leaving train at terminal, sometimes dawdling to look at railroad equipment; walking by and sometimes entering fisheries museum; passing central town park where military band played during mid-day break; strolling by central shopping and business district, or, alternatively, passing fire station with horses at ease under suspended harnesses, ready to go, and continuing past centuries old town hall and other ancient buildings; exploration of fish market and fishing fleet; selection of fish; haggling about price; purchase and return home.

I do not intend to claim that this was usual for a four year old boy on his own. Rather was it due to very unusual parents. The point is that such experiences were possible and permissible at that time while they would be utterly unthinkable today, due in no small measure to the hazards introduced by automobile traffic, among other causes.

When I was five we moved into the town itself, and I started to kindergarten and elementary school soon after. The days would go as follows: off to school with other children joining the morning stream of white-collar pedestrian males ranging from clerks to shipowners, usually not walking with our elders but unavoidably exposed to overhearing adult conversation and observing adult behavior; soon passing a small botanical garden and greenhouse and a large building housing a substantial museum of natural history and a fair museum of history and ethnography; passing, also, a great architectural variety of residences; then the railroad terminal and the building opposite which houses the fisheries museum previously mentioned, and also, on higher floors, a museum of decorative arts, a small city art gallery and the exhibition halls of the art association; past the central park with the music stand to the school, which shared a block with the fire station, city prison and an historic but still functioning public building. These were the days of two work periods with a long mid-day break. During the break the morning route was reversed, with stops to listen to the military band, to pay visits to museums (in my case) and to seek other adventures. At this time the streams would include some women, and it would cross a flow of blue-collar workers moving in the other direction. In the afternoon the pedestrian procession would go back again, but now with a considerable number of wives on errands of their own, starting out with, or more or less at the same time as their husbands, and proceeding to the same parts of town, sometimes accompanied by their children, there being no afternoon elementary school. When spending free time in our own neighborhood, I had only about 900 feet to walk to watch activities in a booming shipyard; about 1000 feet farther along came the public aquarium; and immediately beyond that was the seawater moat protecting the naval station, where stichlebacks nested in the seaweeds; sculpins, gobies and small flounders darted about and could be watched for hours. In another direction it was about 500 feet to ferry stairs where I could fish, about 600 feet to a large dock and coal depot, and many rocky, still vacant lots to explore. There were also frequent visits, unaccompanied, back to the natural history and the history museum. This is actually only a very incomplete list of how things were around 1905-7.

The child's daily orbit has been even more sharply curtailed than its mobility. It seems the ideal of all urban designers to place the schools as near the homes as possible and with the simplest route between them, at the same time as urban growth is pushing residential precincts and school districts farther and farther away from the centers of history and of current affairs. A child's exposure to the life of the city two to four times daily has become a thing of the past.

Sixty years ago the orbits of men and women were also essentially the same. Automobile transportation has greatly increased the mobility of both, but has also separated the orbits of housewives from those of husbands and of women workers in business, industry, government and the professions. This reduction of urban experience shared in common by men, women and children also reduces their ability to communicate with each other.

The individualistic architectural diversity on the way to school has for most children been replaced by a walk, if not a ride, within the monotonous anonymity of new housing developments, and the twice daily autonomous plunge into the heartland of urbanity has become a rare and guided event during the early years of life.

MEDIA: PROPOSED TOWN AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

New Town: Halfway between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore / part of east coast megalopolis / initially dependent - eventually self-contained / population of 150,000 / privately developed / diverse employment characteristics / commuters. LOW DENSITY

Educational Plan: Libraries as the educational centers / all age and economy levels / 24 hour education-recreation / Media Educational Foundation / adult education and university programs / programs for urban adjustment / neighborhood educational "service stations" / town learning resources center / senior resources center / city learning resource and exhibition center / industrial learning resources center.

EDUCATION AS COMMUNICATING SYSTEMS

to enrich the experience of living

in a continuing process

beyond the limits associated with schools: no differentiation of the library, art museums parks and recreation

regardless of space limits and age limits

within both private and other kinds of public spaces: home, office, factory, market, civic and recreational places

among individuals through self-instructional, electronic retrieval systems

within the community through social meeting places

for information and creative stimulation

with a maximum of options for the individual and the group

with adaptability for growth and change

through direct means: books, computers, teachers, classes

indirect means: varieties of stimuli en route to other places

ADAPTED

We adapted the proposed town plan of Media

EDUCATION AS COMMUNICATING SYSTEMS

THE EDUCATIONAL-COMMERCIAL STRIP

EDUCATIONAL-COMMERCIAL STRIP

Education as the basis for the total city service system

The interweaving educational, commercial and movement systems make up a STRIP.

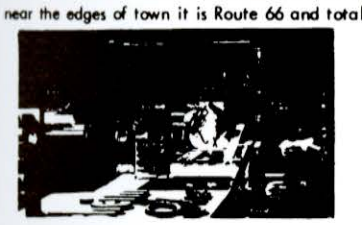
This communication strip is the generator of the city; the residential grids are residual.

The penetrations of the strip within the grids and the elongations of its borders exploit contradictions and increase incidental and accidental contacts and exposure between the public and private places: wherever you walk or drive you can see more (variety) and you can do more (options).

Only the generating roads and some of the schools (learning resources centers) are originally designed and 'tasteful': the other, adapting elements, private and public, which can be called mini-structures, are anonymously designed and within the 'vulgar' realm of the developer. The former are communal and cooperative, the latter individual and competitive.

The open-ended strip allows phased growth: its mini-structures--as opposed to mega-structures--allow easy change, short term as well as long term: continuity yet diversity.

The strip is adaptable: its character changes between its edges and along its length. Near the centers of the towns it is Main Street with pedestrian interconnection among buildings, near the edges of town it is Route 66 and totally vehicular.



These systems encourage communication through sequences of images which are not purely architectural: inevitable commercial signs and billboards are anticipated and other methods of symbolism which depend on association over the too subtle perception of space and form in light: mixed media are appropriate within the complex program, the vast spaces without urban volumes of the auto-scape and the high speeds along strip developments: architecture defines very little; therefore, signs.

We have accommodated Americans who love cars, drive them all the time and don't mind parking lots: the public transit system is minimal and is buses. Greenways are rare: the walks to schools are not too safe or boring.

The 'learning centers' are always connected because they are within the strips: independent piazzas are out. The only independent nodes are the street-corner 'service stations' within the neighborhood grids which pedestrians filter to.

Non-utopian, viable, conventional elements of the existing city landscape and processes are enhanced: the commercial strip and on-grade parking, the industrial park and the medium density, grid-iron development.

22

EDUCATIONAL BUILDINGS

Structural

A repetitive order of varying kinds of industrial systems

Spatial

A system of repetitive yet hierarchial spaces in varying combinations:

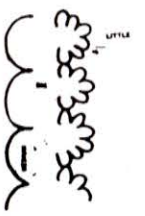
general: big, medium, and little spaces
directional and non-directional spaces

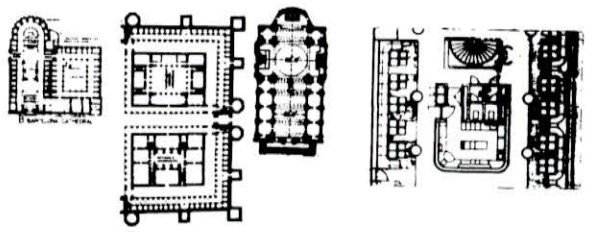
big galleries	(corridor and room)	directional and non-directional space
medium alcoves	(classrooms)	non-directional space
little niches	(carrels)	non-architectural space

particular: incidental social meetings and circulation
planned social meetings
isolated concentration

inter-accessable

ALCOVE
GALLERY
NICHE





FOR ADAPTABILITY OF USE, OPPORTUNITY FOR OPTIONS, ACCIDENT AND BROWSING

A PARALLEL MINI-VERSION OF THE OUT-OF-DOORS STRIP

CONNECTIONS

COMMUNICATING SYSTEMS	PHYSICAL CONNECTION	VISUAL CONNECTION
PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT VEHICULAR MOVEMENT	SIDEWALKS STREETS	YES
BUILDINGS SIGNS	ARCHITECTURAL SYMBOLIC	YES
ELECTRONIC MEDIA	WIRES/WAVES	NO

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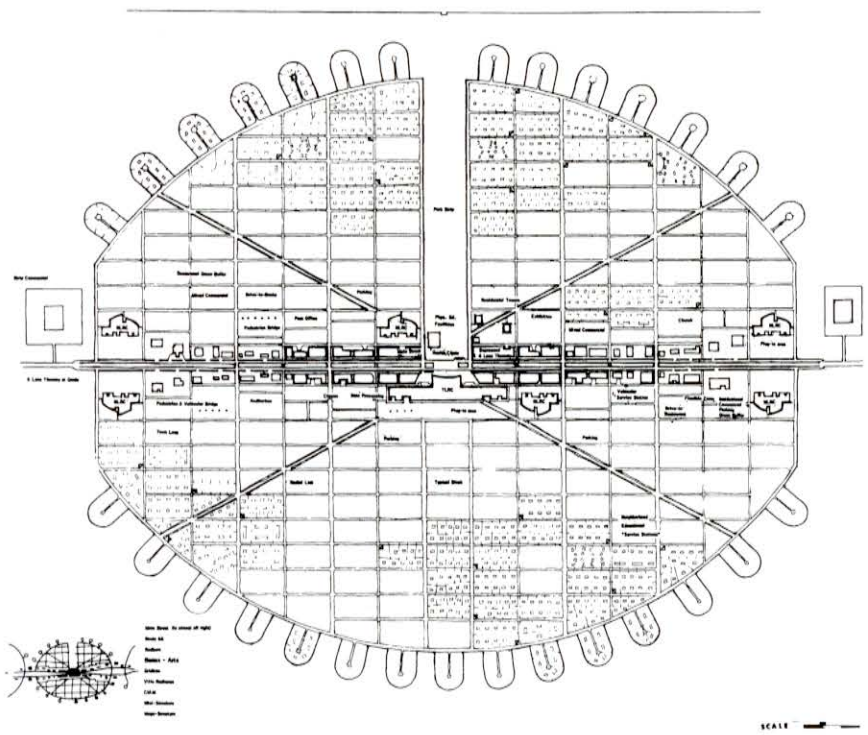

23. Town plan

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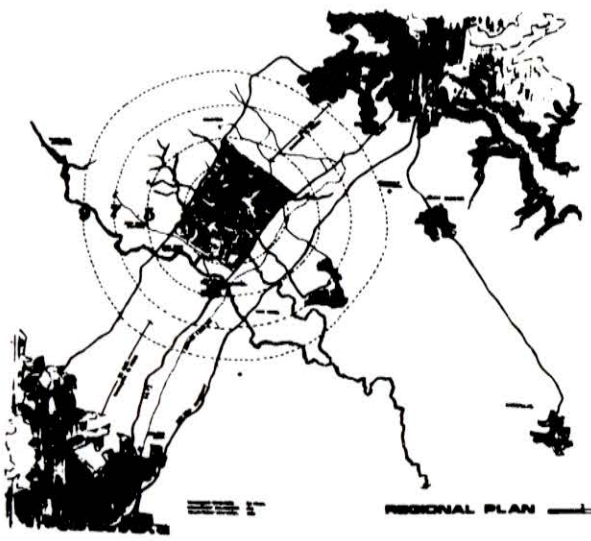
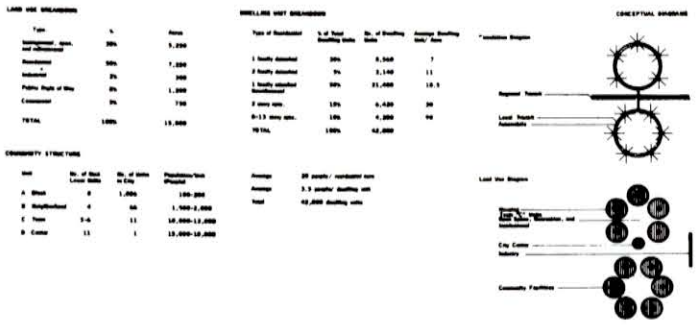
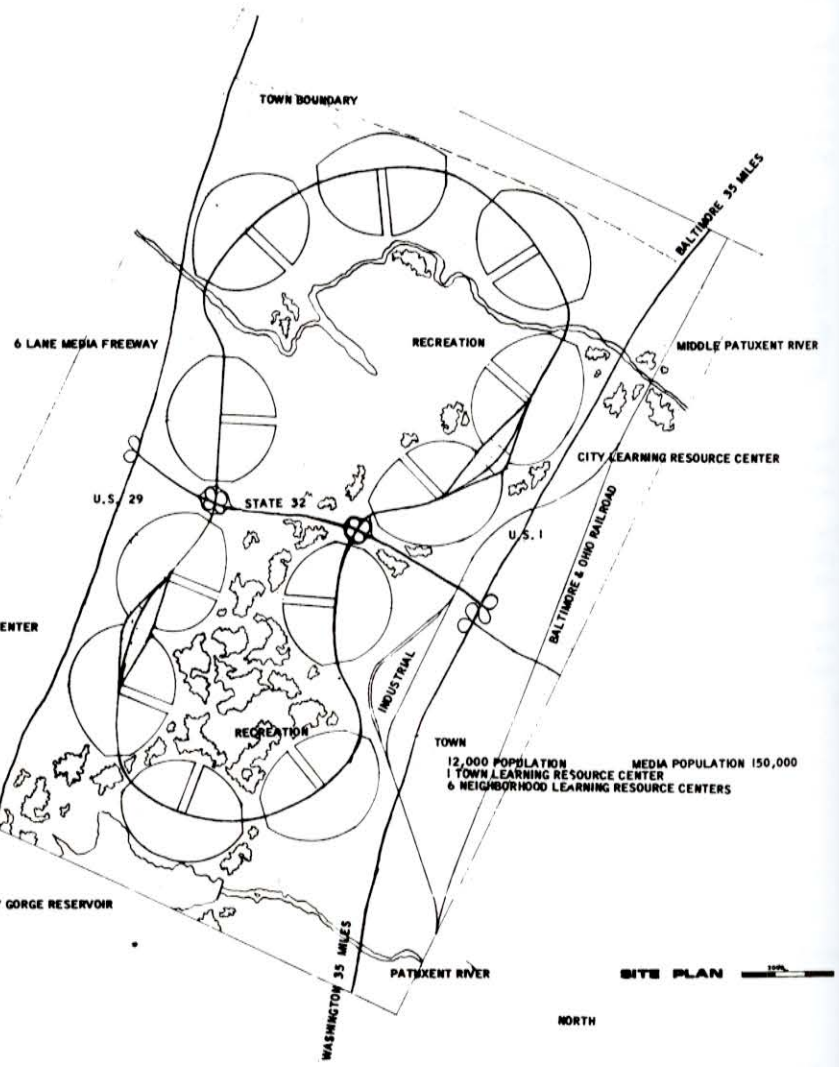
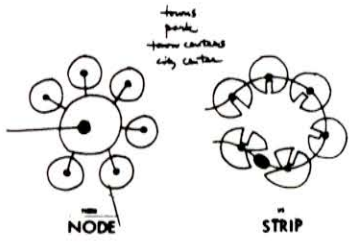
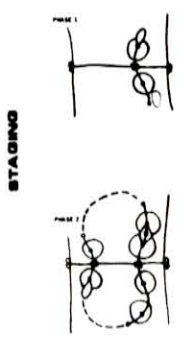
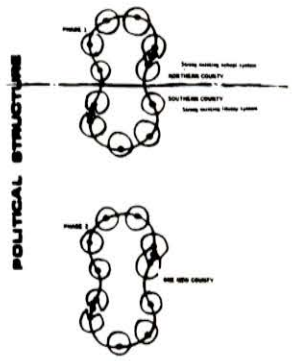






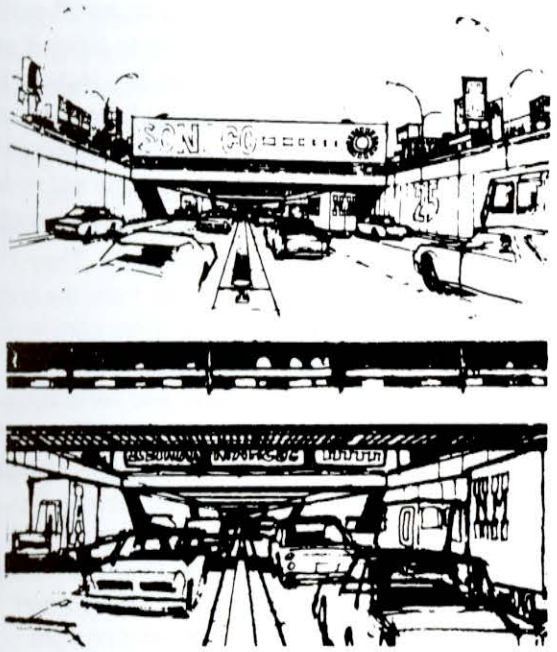


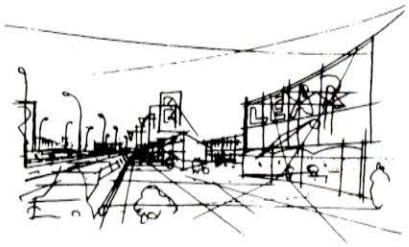


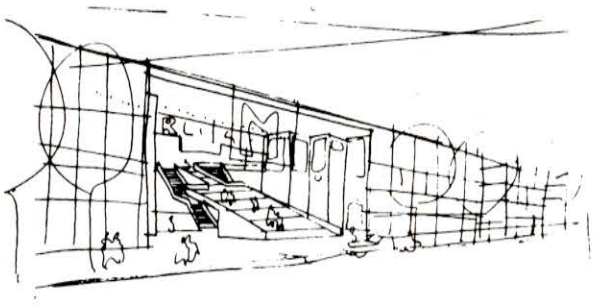


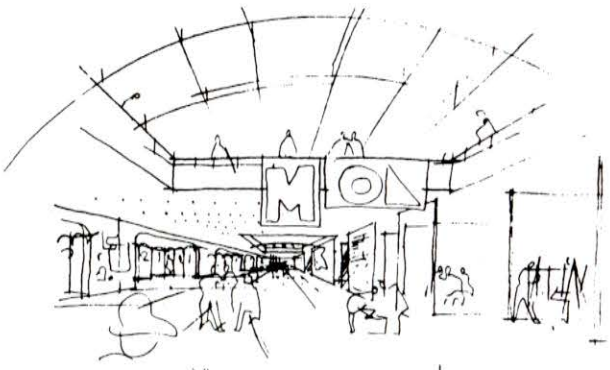
INITIATING AND FINANCIAL STRUCTURE

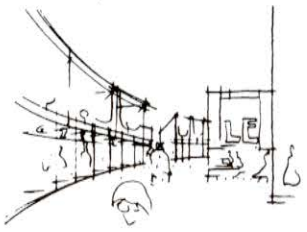
This program is initiated and sponsored by the Media Educational Foundation which has funds available to experiment with new educational programs.











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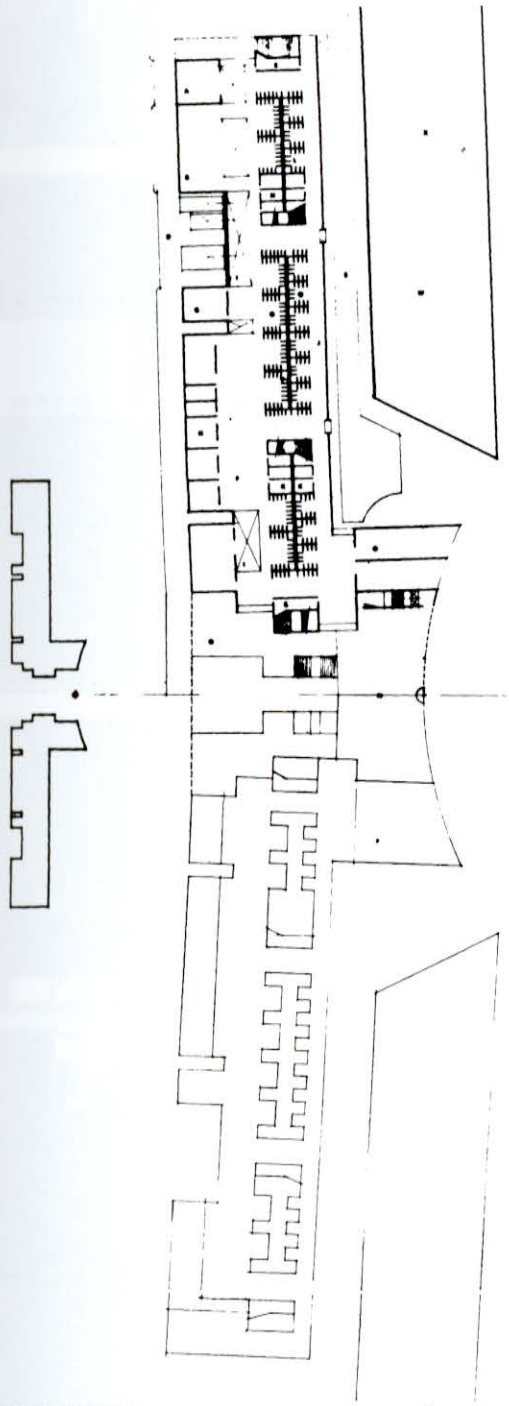
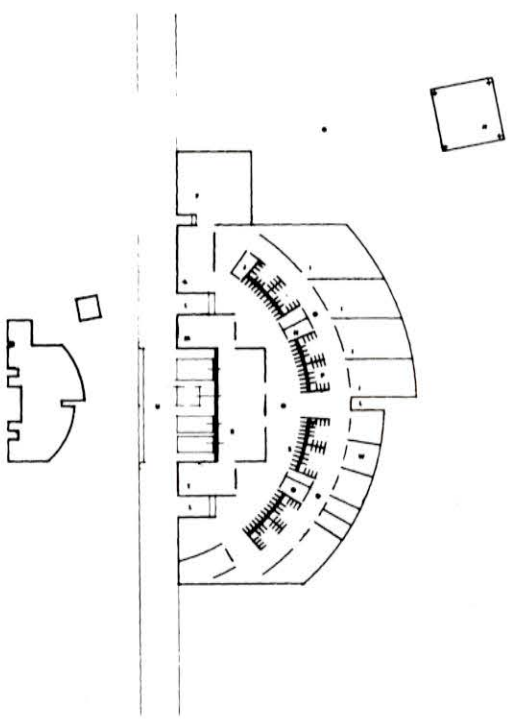
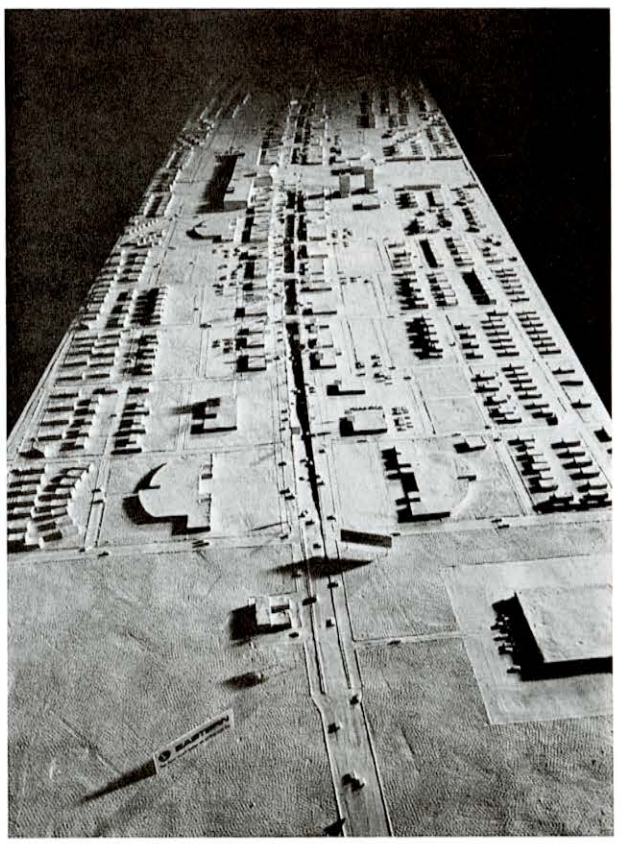


TOWN
LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER



NEIGHBORHOOD
LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER

SERVICE STATIONS



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Mass Communication on the People Freeway, or Piranesi Is Too Easy, 1967

Extract from Perspecta 12, the Yale Architectural Journal, describing a third-year studio project on the redesign of the Herald Square, New York, subway station, given in the fall of 1967 by Robert Venturi, Bruce Adams, and Denise Scott Brown. (Gregory Matviak: Assistant. Class: Architecture: Simeon Bruner, James Caldwell, James Gage, David Hoeffner, Manfred Ibel, David Lessig, Ali Ramazani, Herbert Short, Robert Swenson, Paul Thompson, and Lawrence White. Graphic Design: Vincent Carra, Mario Cruz, Aaron Marcus, Bruce Michel, Ingo Scharrenbroich, and Martha Wagner)

We treated this, not as a problem in circulation planning, but as a problem in communications. The architect has limited control in the first place over the shapes of subway spaces, which are constrained by the street above, the basements of buildings, and the underground utilities. But he can work with lighting and the words and symbols of advertising as well as with assemblages of conventional subway elements such as gum machines. Underground, the usual way of lighting the interiors of civic buildings does not work. Defining whitish walls and architectural details in the low, residual spaces of the underground by flooding them with reflected light promotes neither spaciousness nor – ironically – cheer. But colored lights from visible sources – commercial kiosks and interior-lighted advertisements, set against architectural space with dark absorbent surfaces – obscure the limits of the space and therefore expand them. Recessed spots in the ceiling, like those in dark, low roadside restaurants, illuminate the people and promote safety. The advertising panels enrich this environment in another dimension. They provide grateful respite from the boredom of waiting. The three communication systems of the subway – for direction, safety, and persuasion – are differentiated as in the "chaotic" commercial Strip by accommodation to the human, selective viewing process that allows one to pick out B.M.T. from LADIES and BUY SOAP. Dark surfaces in the subway obscure dirt and the changing advertising signs ensure maintenance as well as variety.

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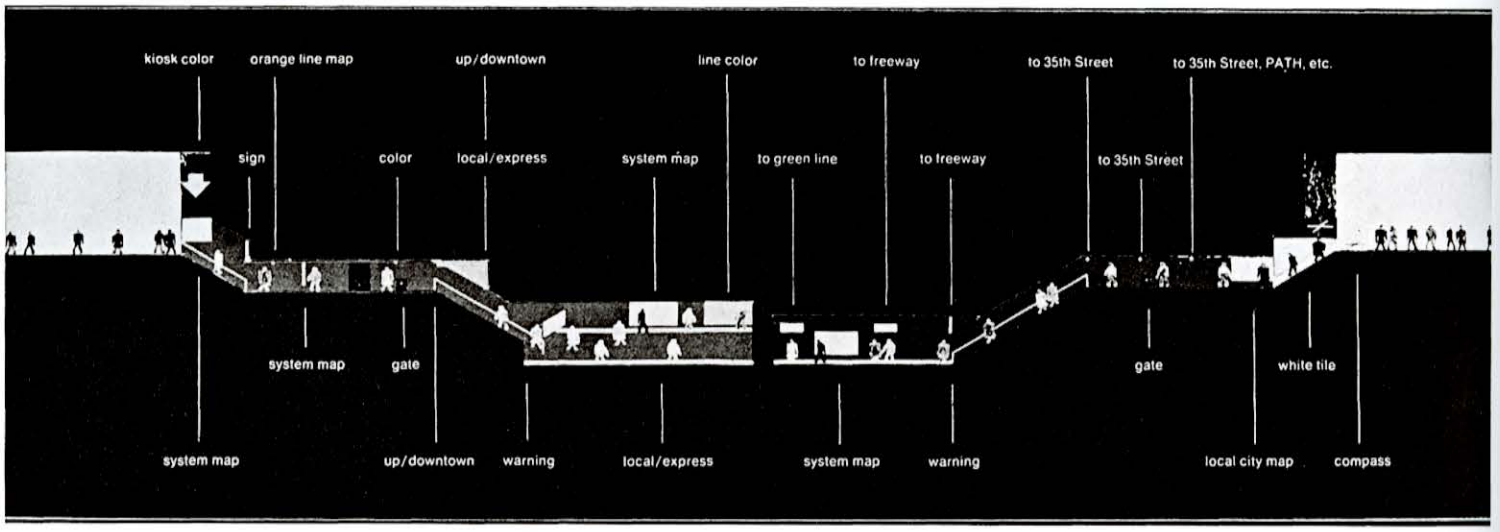
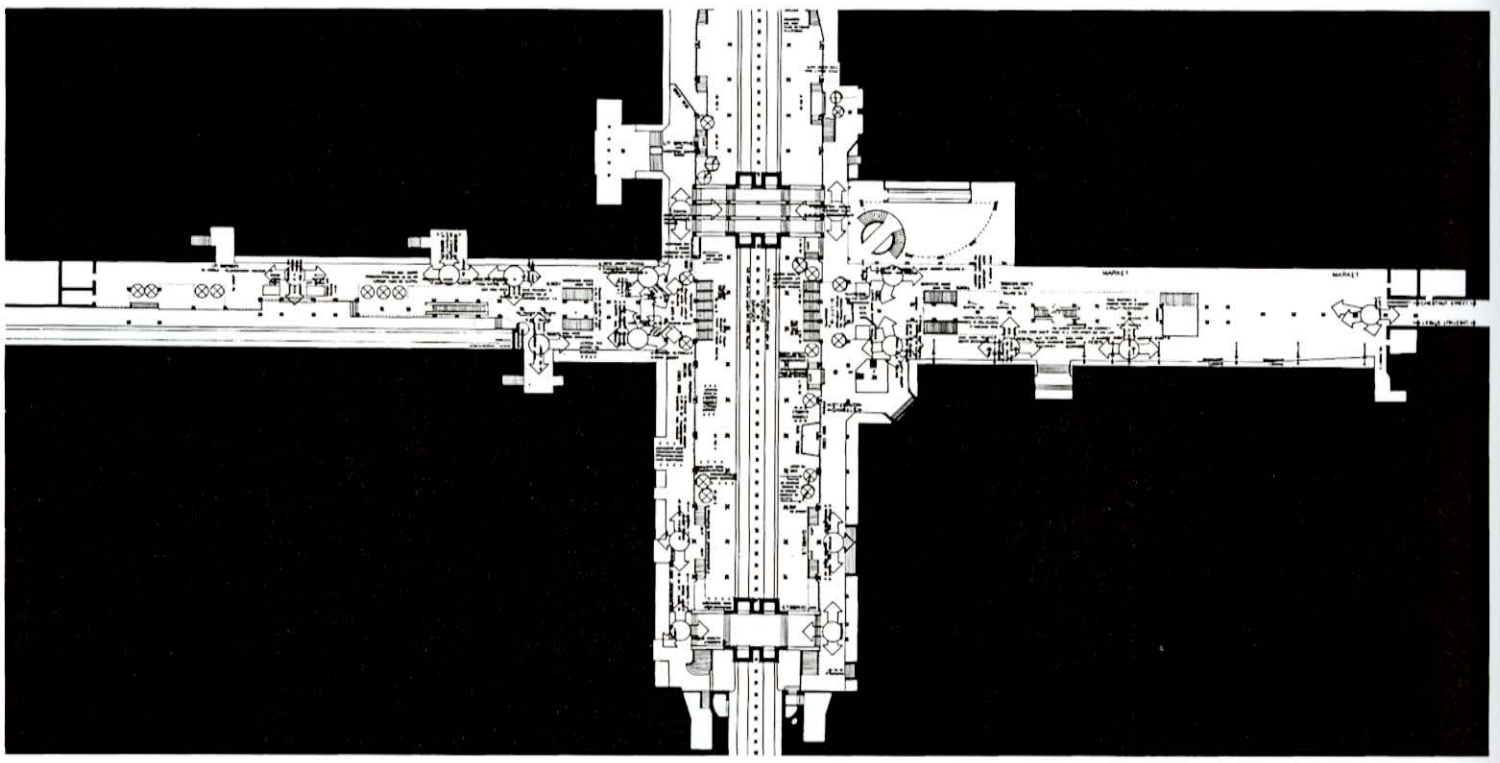


34. Schematic section

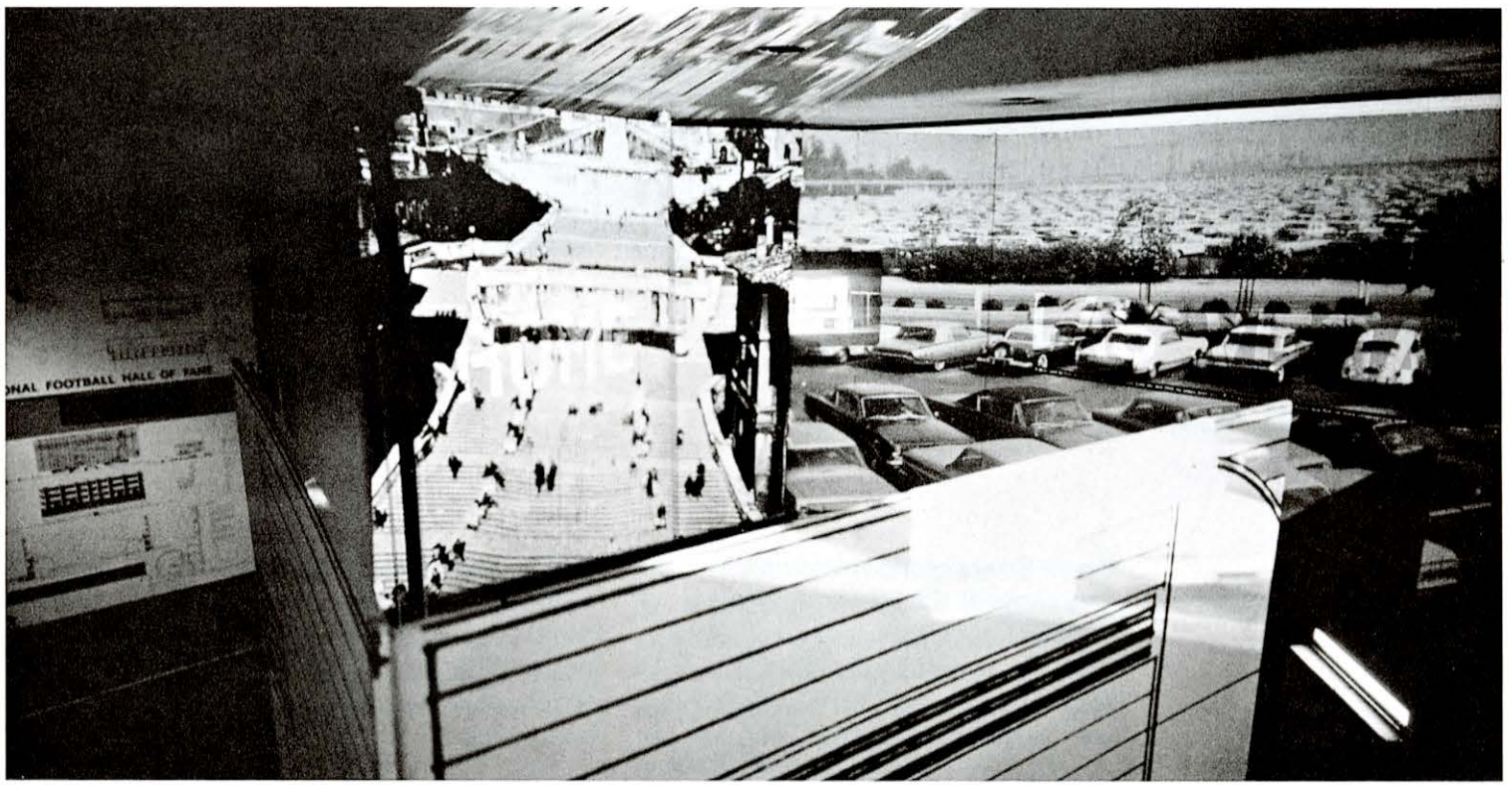


35. Decision points 8th and Market Station, Philadelphia

From Rome to Las Vegas: An Exhibit of the Work of Venturi and Rauch at the Philadelphia Art Alliance, 1968
(with the assistance of Manfred Ibel)

This exhibit showed our work, the theory behind it, and the imagery of the historical urban architecture and pop sprawl architecture that influence us. It was in a little square room, darkened to accommodate big changing slide projections entirely covering two adjacent walls. The other two walls were spotlighted and covered with photographs and diagrams of our buildings and with didactic sayings on architecture. The corner entrance was shielded by a big freestanding panel representing a facade of the Lieb House. (See Eight Houses of Ill Repute at the end of this part.)

The walls with illustrations and words on them were lined with black burlap; the walls with projections on them, with natural burlap; the canvaslike texture of burlap made the Kodachrome urban images resemble Canalettos. The left wall had ROME stenciled across it in big pink letters, the right wall, LAS VEGAS. The images, projected by extra-wide-angle lens projections, spilled over onto each other, the floor, and the ceiling, and shadows of spectators moved across them. Superimposed on the images of Rome and Las Vegas was a series of smaller images of our work, back projected on a plastic screen cut into the burlap. These pictures were more intensely lighted, and they changed at a slower pace than the pictures in the background.



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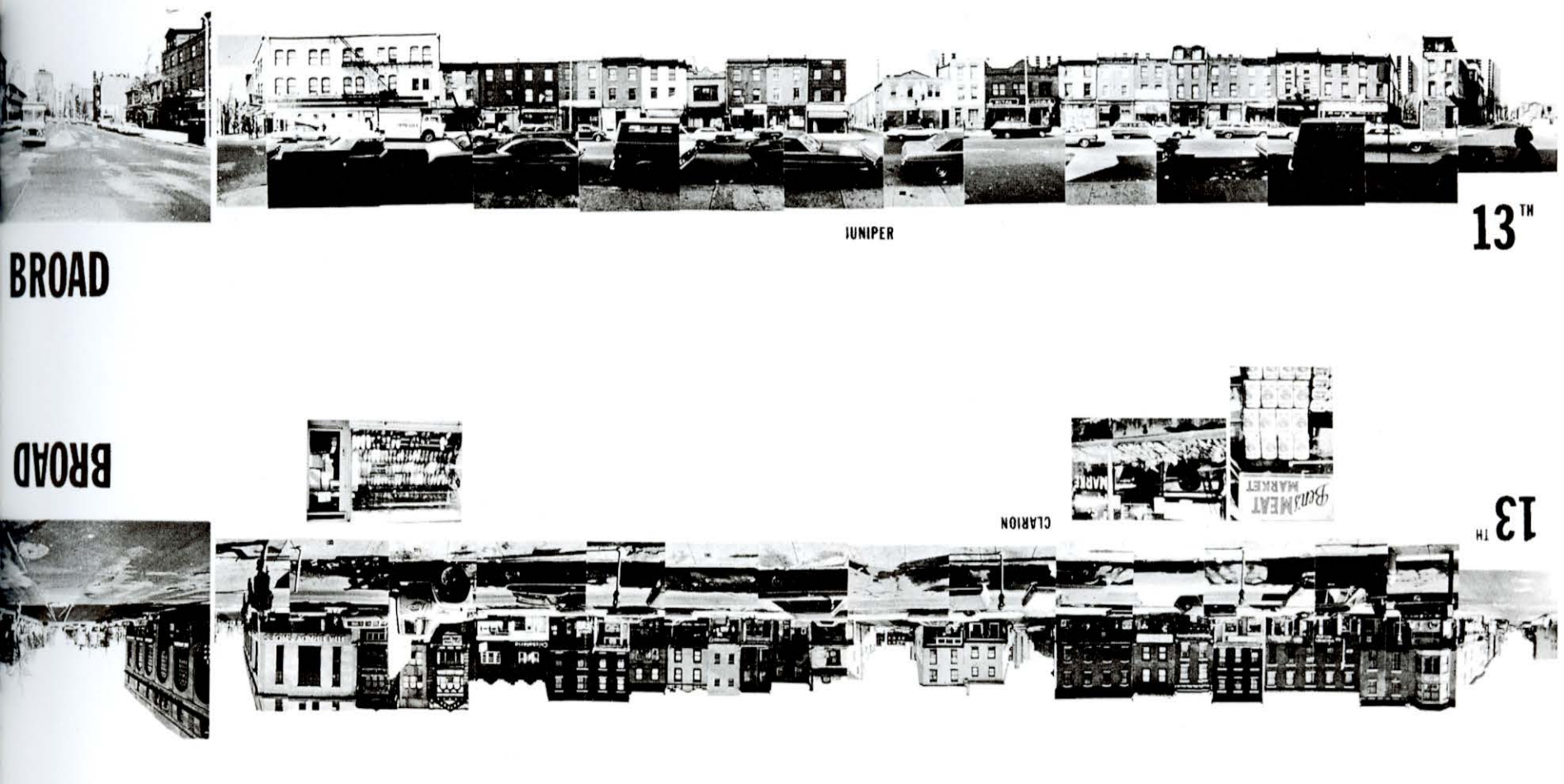
38. Piece of South Street "Ruscha"

The Philadelphia Crosstown Community, 1968
(partner in charge, Denise Scott Brown, with the assistance of Steven Izenour and David Manker)

South Street spans Philadelphia's two rivers at the southern edge of William Penn's plan. It is a commercial strip street at the scale of Main Street. It could, in fact, be called the main street of Philadelphia's center-city black community. At the turn of the century and until the 1920s, it was a fashionable street, serving a center city and a South Philadelphia residential market. Early suburbanization, the Great Depression, and World War II took their toll, but it was not until the 1950s, when South Street was named the last segment of a proposed expressway ring around Philadelphia's central business district, that a 20-year decline set in. Much of South Street stood empty; the fine turn-of-the-century storefronts, preserved architecturally by a lack of pressure for change in the decaying economy, were physically badly deteriorated. In the two-block strip between South and Bainbridge streets, called the "Crosstown Corridor" because it was scheduled to take the "Crosstown Expressway," almost three-quarters of the approximately 6,000 residents required public housing — a relocation load that the already laden city was incapable of handling. In another reality, in a society where the housing of the poor was taken seriously, no architect could defend the maintenance of this area instead of its replacement by new housing for the people living there, but such an option did not exist.

For all its decay and for all the evidence of social and individual distress, South Street is a lively, lovely piece of city: Main Street to South Central Philadelphia, where outfitters, bridal, fabric, hardware, and electrical stores share with communes, workshops, and art galleries, storefront churches, curio, junk, and thrift shops. It is more capable of endearing itself to the imagination than the more famous but less vital Society Hill that borders it to the north and east. By the late 1960s, a new spirit was abroad; a group was formed and was headed by Mrs. Alice Lipscomb. It represented the neighborhood groups that string the length of South Street and was based in a storefront at 820 South Street. Pickets appeared at City Hall, and city government, fearful of urban unrest and eager for peace in the long, hot summer ahead, heard the voice of the community over those of the State Highway Department and Chamber of Commerce and stopped the Crosstown Expressway. South Central Philadelphia was scheduled to receive federal funds for planning and renewa



At this point (early in 1968) Venturi and Rauch were approached by an advisor to the Committee who said, "If you can like the Las Vegas Strip, we trust you not to try to neaten up South Street at the expense of its occupants." We were to be architects and planners to the Citizens' Committee, under contract but without fee, to plan for the Crosstown Community, as represented by the Citizens' Committee to Preserve and Develop the Crosstown Community (CCPDCC), and help present its case to the public and to governmental and private agencies whose decisions affected the community, notably, the Highway Department, the City Planning Commission, and the Chamber of Commerce. Other volunteers employed by the Citizens' Committee were Robert Sugarman, lawyer; Janet Reiner, Thomas Reiner, and Louis Rosenburg, planners. Short-term services were also given by various architects, transportation planners, and economic consultants. Later the Committee had the full-time help of Al Hinckey of the AIA Architect's Workshop and Mitch Smith, an architectural VISTA volunteer, and of Mrs. Julia Robinson, housing and community consultant.

By mid-1968, the Crosstown Expressway was an open issue again, opened by the Chamber of Commerce; plans and funding were postponed, and Mayor Tate had established an eleven-man committee to reconsider the question.

Meanwhile, a counterplan was evolving in our office. It was based on CCPDCC goals, on members' detailed knowledge of the area, and on information available in local agencies, such as it was. The primary focus was on the rehabilitation of housing for low-income owners and renters, with corresponding neighborhood improvements and with minimum relocation of households. Second came economic and social advancement through increase of local employment, local business ownership, and home ownership. The plan proposed placed control of local planning in community hands, enabled the community to receive income and profits from land development, and rehabilitated South Street as the "strip center" of a vital commercial, cultural, and civic life.

Venturi and Rauch proposed a short-run transportation plan that relied on a reorganization of local roads for in-town traffic distribution and pressed for further study of long-range transportation alternatives by local and regional planning agencies. We recommended that the community make the most of the unique character and reputation of South Street by imaginatively restoring shop fronts and by immediately refurbishing two buildings, one east and one west of Broad Street, to become neighborhood services centers — one-stop shopping for governmental and social services — to the community and civic nuclei for community regeneration. We also recommended improving streets, sidewalks, parking, and signs and devising a historical and cultural promenade linking important locations on and off South Street, as was done in Society Hill.

In a report to the CCPDCC, we said:

The strip quality of South Street makes it unique and helps it best to serve the communities it links since it can deliver immediate services to a large area of non-mobile

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people. If, as the Planning Commission believes, there should be a build-up of commercial nodes on South Street, this should not be accompanied by an attrition in the interstices but should be planned to allow the new building to revitalize the whole strip, and to maintain the continuity of commercial and civic uses along its length.

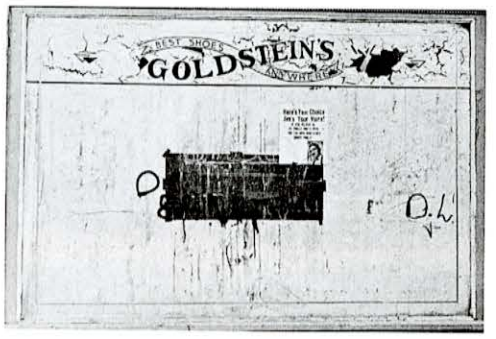
We suggest the community should get in first in the interstices, and radiate out from a set of civic nuclei on the 1700 and 900 blocks, south of South Street. Around these nuclei should be concentrated most of the projects that are in the air for the crosstown area including the Center City and Society Hill libraries, the neighborhood services centers, the health center, mini-schools . . . leased-house, turnkey, and low-income home-ownership housing. Existing mobile services — library, health, jobmobile, theater — should be encouraged to stop at a series of locations on South Street especially at the civic nuclei, and new ones — a mobile city hall, an education trailer with movie unit — should be suggested.

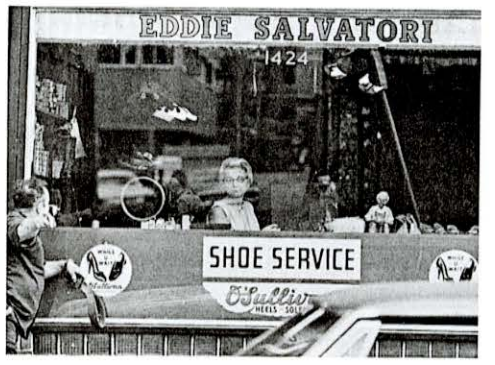
Commercial renewal within and beside the civic areas should be undertaken in conjunction with programs for black store ownership. Later, when large-scale change comes to South Street, well-established community areas, and especially their commercial edges, will benefit from the increased market, so long as the new parking facilities that must go with commercial build-up are planned to give access both ways.

The large-scale nodes, carefully staged and planned, need not be antithetical to the interest of the community, but the community should act as watchdog in their planning. Also the community can infuse imagination and character into the at-present skeletal plans for these areas.

The Committee in general approved the plan. It was, indeed, their plan; their detailed knowledge and their dreams gave it life. In turn, the plan helped them focus their ideas and gave them a context for the many activities they were undertaking. However, they suggested that the transportation plans be omitted. Transportation planning, they felt, with the political issues it develops, should not be an activity of a local citizens' group and belongs with a governmental agency. There were several transportation alternatives fo the area, and the community should not ally itself with one. Also plans to involve the community in decora tive wall painting were vetoed: "If we had people with the time and ability to organize wall painting, we'd be using them to organize something more important than wall painting." Similarly, the architecturally fashionable mobile facilities — jobmobiles and healthmobiles for instance — were frowned upon as an inadequate commitment to the area from government: "Anything that can drive up here can drive away again." New built facilities would symbolize a faith in the community and a permanent block to the expressway.

We presented the plan to the Mayor' Committee, and the second phase of our professional activity for the CCPDCC began. This consisted mai ly in attending meetings of neighbor hood and other groups with membe of the CCPDCC to make the case fo





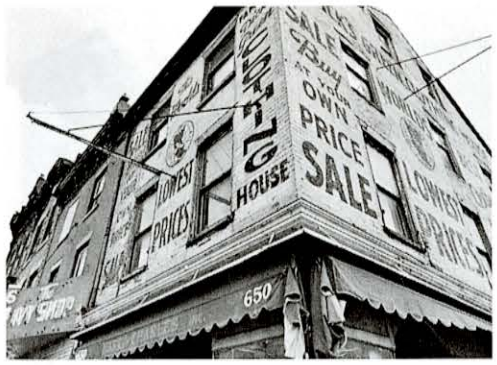
the community and against the expressway. Our value to the Committee at this point was that, as professional architects and planners, we could say with authority that the area had value and deserved preservation. We could ask people to see their old environment with new eyes, and because we were "experts," this carried weight. In addition, our drawings and maps proved evocative, although they were meager owing to lack of funds; in fact, they were perhaps better than more explicit drawings because people could fill them with their own dreams.

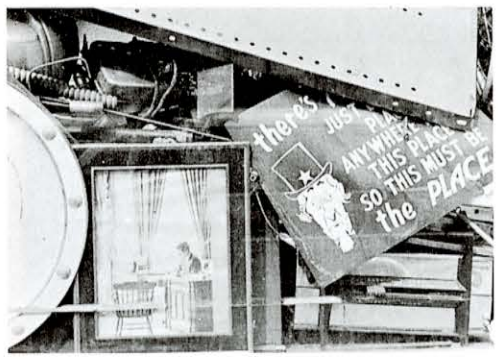
The Committee became adept at using the mass media to maximum advantage – getting on TV or alerting the young reporter who would spot and cover the Highway Department's latest move. At one point, the CCPDCC got good political coverage in the art news section of a local daily when no other section of the paper was sympathetic. At another point, a State Highway Department proposal to relocate Skid Row to South Philadelphia was leaked to the press, and the head of the State Highway Department was burned in effigy by irate South Philadelphians.

We found that architectural megastructural fantasies for South Street were used by "the other side," the Chamber of Commerce and the State Highway Department, to sell the Crosstown Expressway. One such plan was presented to the Mayor's Committee by a self-styled city father. It contained everything we had advocated to that Committee the week before – housing for local residents, community facilities, small stores – but set on a cover over the expressway. When one of us demurred that this might be the world's most expensive highway, that the cover would not be built, and that, if built, it would surely not be for low-income residents, he replied, "Where is your faith in America, Mrs. Venturi? Philadelphia will do it! Remember the Bauhaus!"

In this work, we have been the opposite of the "value-free technician" of the planning texts of the 1950s. Rather we have shared a set of moral values with our clients and tried to apply rational skills and professional expertise to their value position. Our work has been "political" in the sense that we have been employed by, and advocates for, a recognizable constituency.

Meanwhile, back at the Mayor's Committee, two long, hot summers had passed, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was threatening reallocation of funds for South Central Philadelphia to another city if a decision were not made on the expressway; HUD's deadline was the end of 1970. Finally a Consortium was formed by the city, of consultants in transportation, economics, urban design, architecture, and community relations, and $400,000 was allocated to a four-month study of transportation alternatives for the South Central Area.





By contrast, the CCPDCC was unable to fund its professionals in any way, although a grant of money for the Committee's own office and secretarial expenses was made by the Harrison Foundation of Philadelphia. Also, we were unable to find sources of funds for our work. (In one ironic week we were turned down on a funding request for the Las Vegas study because we were "not socially concerned" and on the Crosstown Community because we were "too political.")

In its allotted time, the Consortium recommended against the Crosstown Expressway and in favor of a transportation plan similar to ours.

The expressway seems to be dead. The South Central Area Neighborhood Development Program is being set up amid turmoils that would make another good story, and Venturi and Rauch are hoping to find a way to continue as architects and planners to the community within the new governmentally funded planning organization.

What did we learn in Las Vegas that we could apply on South Street? Certainly not that the Crosstown Community should become a place of gambling high life and neon high readers; rather that beauty could emerge from the existing fabric and that a not-too-apparent order should be sought from within rather than an easy one imposed from above. We learned that piecemeal development need not spell disunity. In a zone of small, incremental changes during a time of political uncertainty, general physical plans should not be too specific, and no one decision is big enough to warrant holding up the development process (for example, to search for the very best cluster of houses to rehabilitate) if you risk thereby losing the opportunity to get the job done at all.

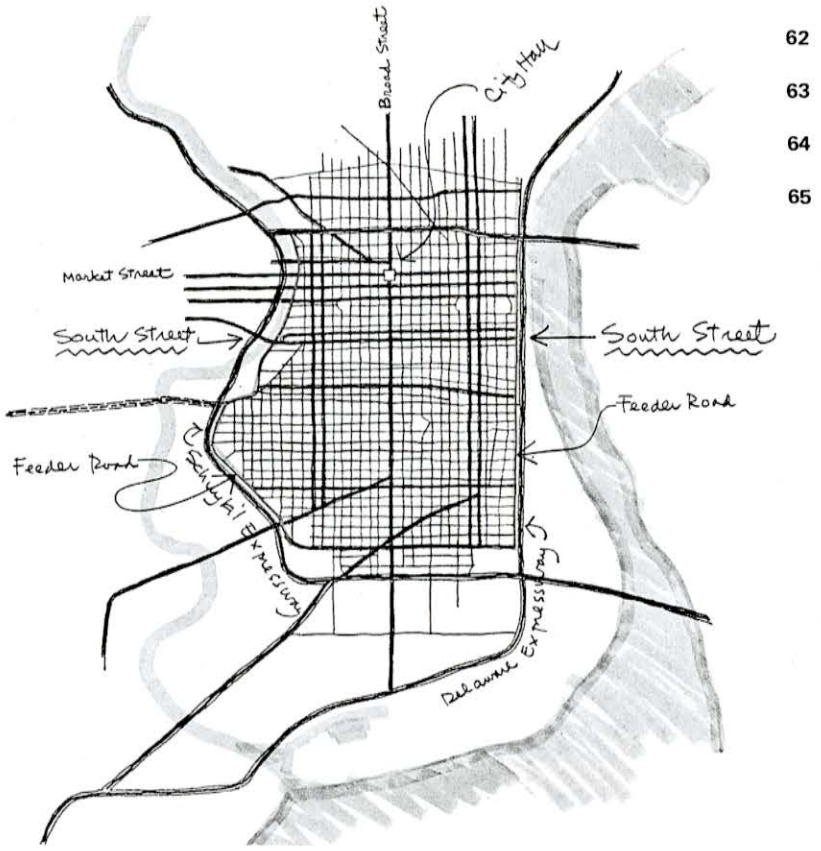
From our observations on the use of megastructures and air-rights plans to gain political support for an expressway rammed through a ghetto, we suggest that architects who make such proposals for today's urban America should ask themselves seriously who will benefit from them and who will suffer; or, more precisely, whether global architecture, when it depends for its social largesse and architectural quality on the social conscience and design sensitivity of the Highway Department, will not disrupt the urban poor and deaden the urb, even if it pleases the business community.

"Total design," Bauhaus-style, was intended to be accompanied by governmental and societal commitment to social programs. In America today this is not so, and the Bauhaus ideals as well as our more recent large-scale architectural urbanistic dreams will be used as they were on South Street to betray rather than support the social concerns from which they sprang.

So far, our physical and architectural plans and images for the Crosstown area, although they have been positive and evocative, have been advisedly unspecific. As the planning arm of the community is organized, the time comes to develop them and apply the lessons more specifically that we have learned from Las Vegas, though surely not ones that will induce anyone to reproduce the Strip in South Philadelphia. Finally, in this work, we learned what most planners and many architects find hard to accept: There is a strong relation in architecture and urbanism between social concern and aesthetic concern, and neither should be ignored for the sake of the other. Indeed, the architect or physical planner cannot work sympathetically and "from the inside" in the city unless he first learns to love it – for the life of its people and for the messy vitality of its body. Without this second love, the first will be theoretical indeed. After all, the worst devastations of urban renewal were accomplished within a rhetoric that proclaimed "the good of the people."

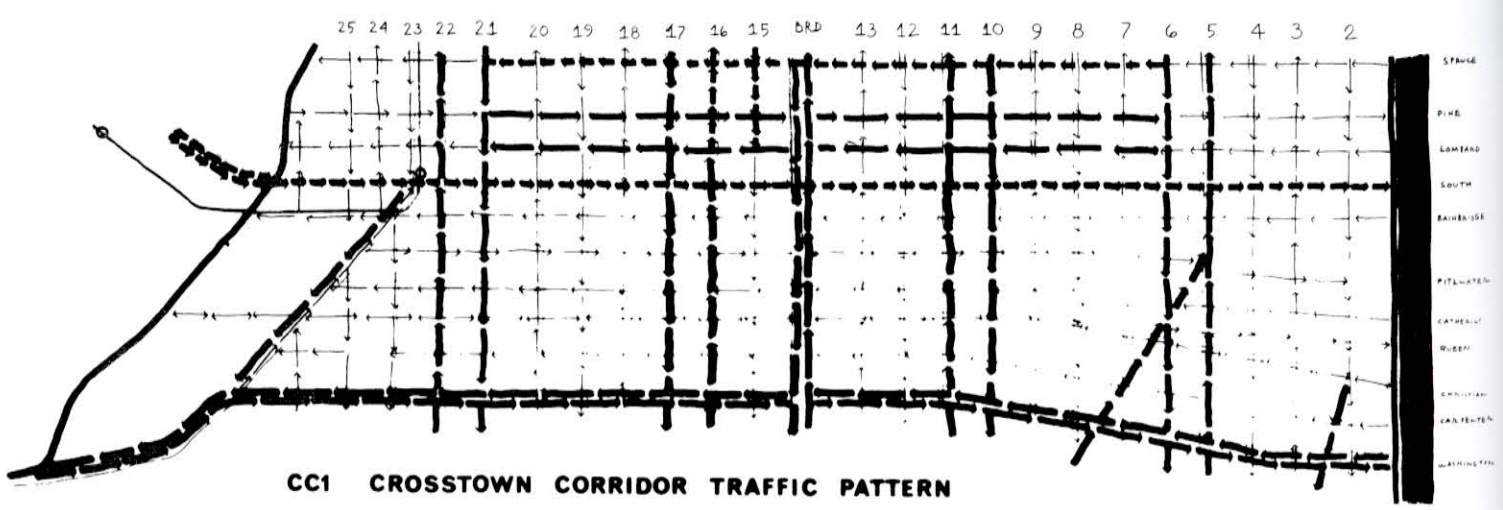
The Region

We proposed the CBD expressway ring be left incomplete and that CBD traffic from the south be routed along the rivers on the proposed and existing expressways and on two new embankment roads; Washington Avenue would become a major, on-grade, median-stripped, limited-access arterial; South and Bainbridge streets would become a one-way couple with synchronized lights; and a federal program for the improvement of existing local streets would be applied in Central and South Central Philadelphia.



The South Central Area

Traffic volumes are even for most north-south and major east-west streets. The street improvement program and access limitations to Washington Avenue would alter this, differentiating between different types of movement and the different characters of streets.



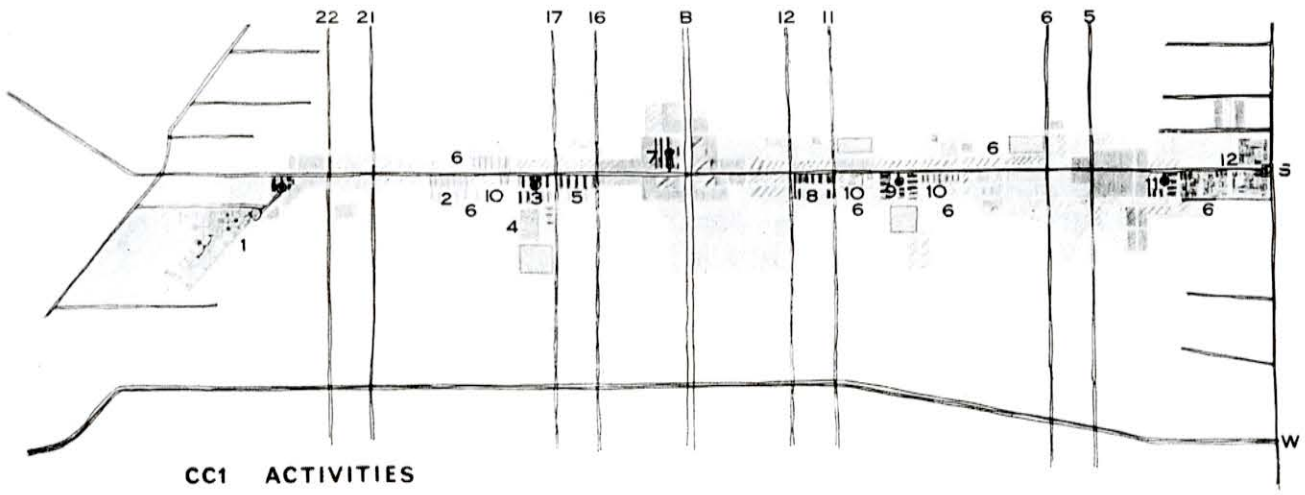
CC1 CROSSTOWN CORRIDOR TRAFFIC PATTERN

Action Areas

We recommended that the community start immediately with rehabilitation and community facilities in an "East Center" and "West Center" in the areas between the commercial nodes proposed for South Street by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission.

Activities Plan

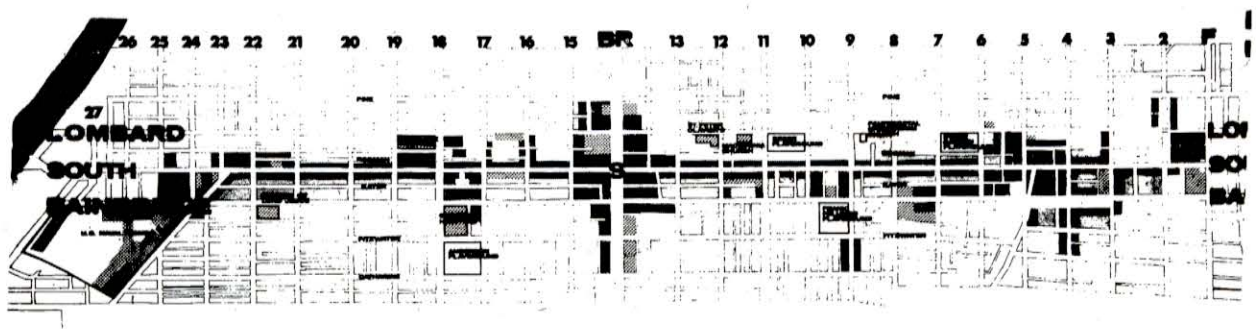
South Street is commercial on the ground floor, residential above. We hoped to maintain this pattern despite the lack of governmental programs to rehabilitate mixed commercial-residential buildings. Diverse and vital areas such as the Las Vegas Strip and the Crosstown Community do not lend themselves to conventional land use mapping. As in the Las Vegas study, we tried to devise a system suggesting the atomistic quality of the land use and the dynamics of the proposed development (see key). Numbers representing various programs are applied to the map to avoid showing specific sites and buildings at too early a stage in the planning process.



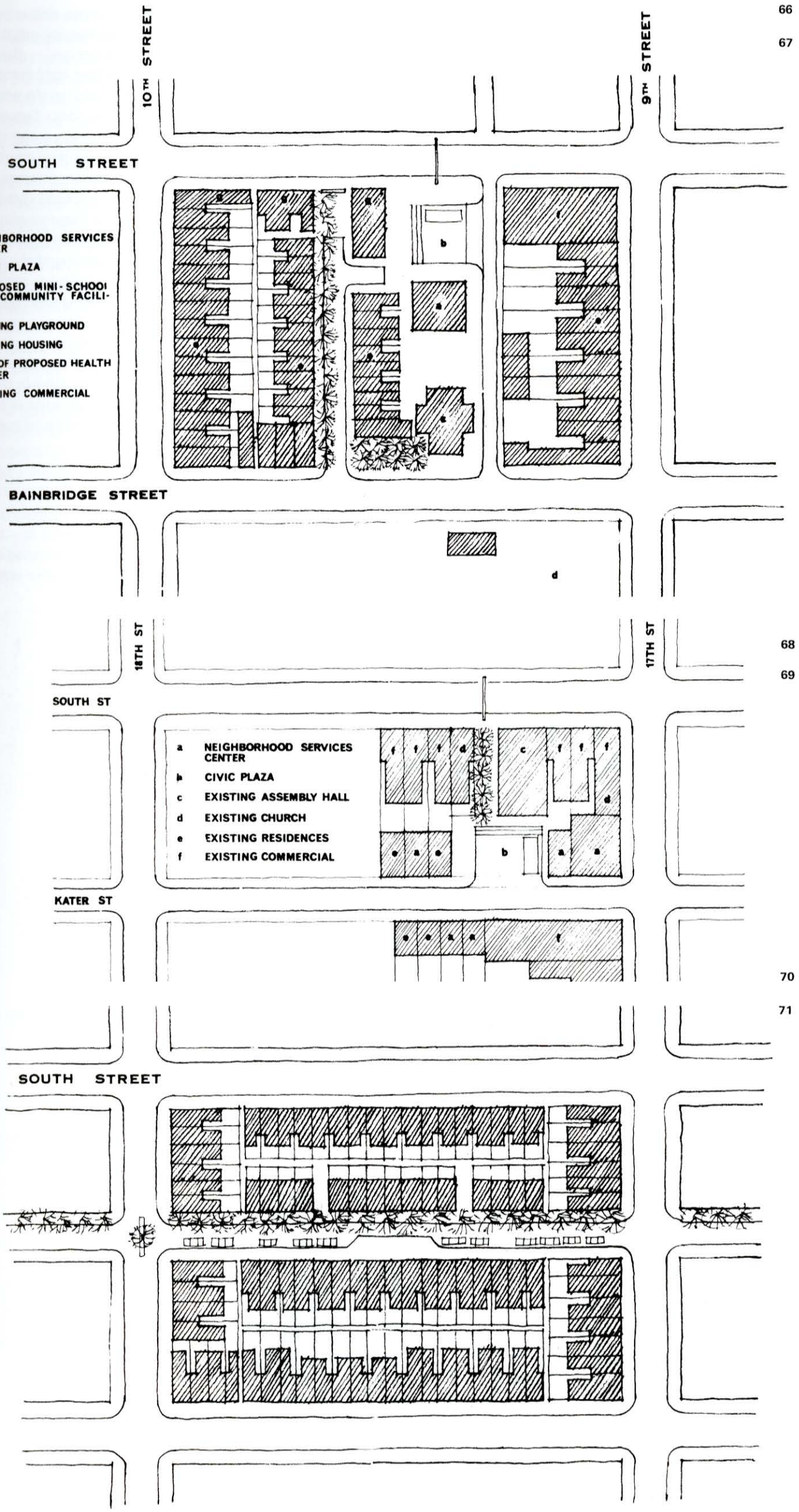
CC1 ACTIVITIES

Horizontal and vertical lines designate recommended direct action. Diagonal lines designate desired reaction.

1. Reuse of Naval Home
2. Amalgamated Clothiers' housing
3. Neighborhood Services Center
4. Children's Hospital
5. Center City Library; single-person turnkey housing
6. Leased-House Program
7. Museum for Negro Culture and History
8. Diagnostic Relocation Center turnkey housing
9. Neighborhood Services Center
10. 221H Home Ownership Program
11. Neighborhood Services Center
12. Intensive renewal area



GROUND FLOOR LAND USES



East Center and West Center
(with the assistance of Ueland and Junker, Architects and Planners)
There is federal money for capital expenditures for neighborhood services centers that provide one-stop shopping for local residents for city social and welfare services and for other needs suggested by the the community. We wanted two of these on South Street. They would use existing buildings and minimal application of easily applied symbolism. They could demonstrate rather quickly that someone cared about South Street.

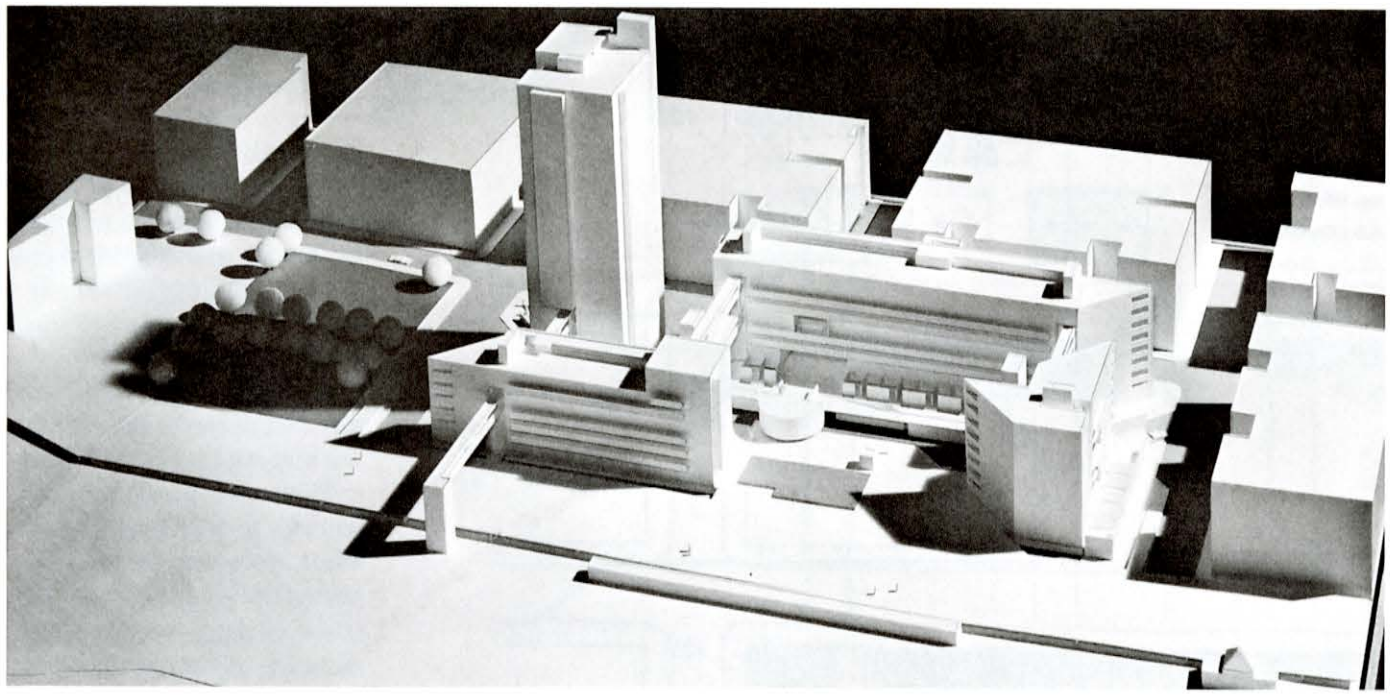
Housing
(with the assistance of Ueland and Junker, Architects and Planners)
Kater Street, one block south of South, is small-scale residential along most of its length. We recommended minimal changes to the street pattern — planted medians at intersections as barriers to east-west movement, widening of parts of sidewalks for play areas, no street closings, no house demolition for off-street parking.

Brighton Beach Housing Competition, 1968
(in association with Frank Kawasaki, with the assistance of Denise Scott Brown and Gerod Clark)

The first picture won the first prize in the Brighton Beach Competition and the second picture won the third prize. Theirs (Wells-Koetter's) is a duck, and ours is a shed, and the analyses in the jury reports by Philip Johnson and Donlyn Lyndon make the theoretical cases for the duck and the shed. Philip Johnson wrote:

This jury is indicative of many problems in today's architecture and deserves full discussion and publicity. To the majority, of which I was one, [the Venturi and Rauch-Kawasaki submission] seemed a pair of very ugly buildings. We felt (the majority consisted besides myself of Messrs. Abrams, Sert and Ratensky) that the buildings looked like the most ordinary apartment construction built all over Queens and Brooklyn since the Depression, that the placing of the blocks was ordinary and dull. The forms that the buildings took were, in our eyes, deliberately ugly. There were some obvious merits: the town houses set around the cul-de-sac of the street, and the extension of the boardwalk surrounding the base building. But these minor virtues seemed to us overwhelmed by the all-pervading ugliness. . . .

The first prize winner strikes me as a rich and satisfactory solution. . . . The general conception. . . pleased us all. First, a tower (which may have to be lowered) on the west, facing the existing park. Second, a six-story surrounding group that semi-encloses a multilevel court. . . . The directions of the entrances, passages and the walkways are skillfully handled; the diagnoal entrance from the northeast being particularly dramatic. The massing of the parks seems especially skillful as against many of the entries whose towers stand up at random from a low grouping. There are hardly any innovative features in this design. It could have been designed at any time in the past 15 years, but its excellence in the handling of the grammar of our time is praiseworthy.



72. First Prize submission, Wells/Koetter

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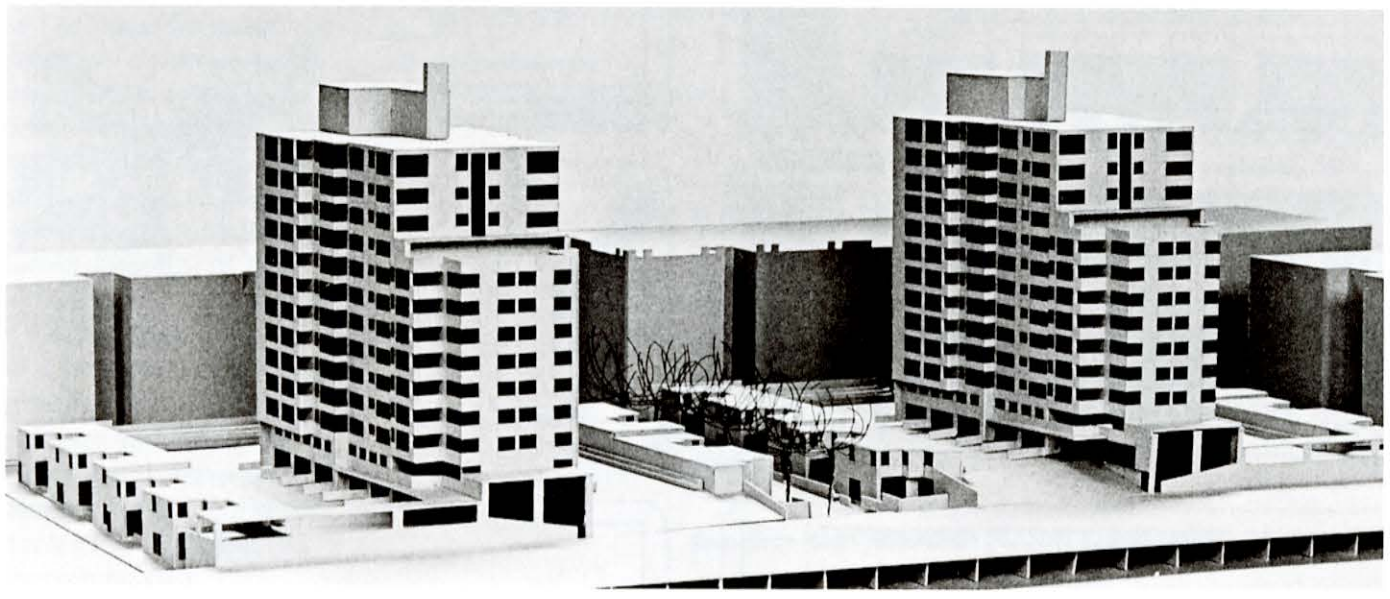


Donlyn Lyndon wrote:

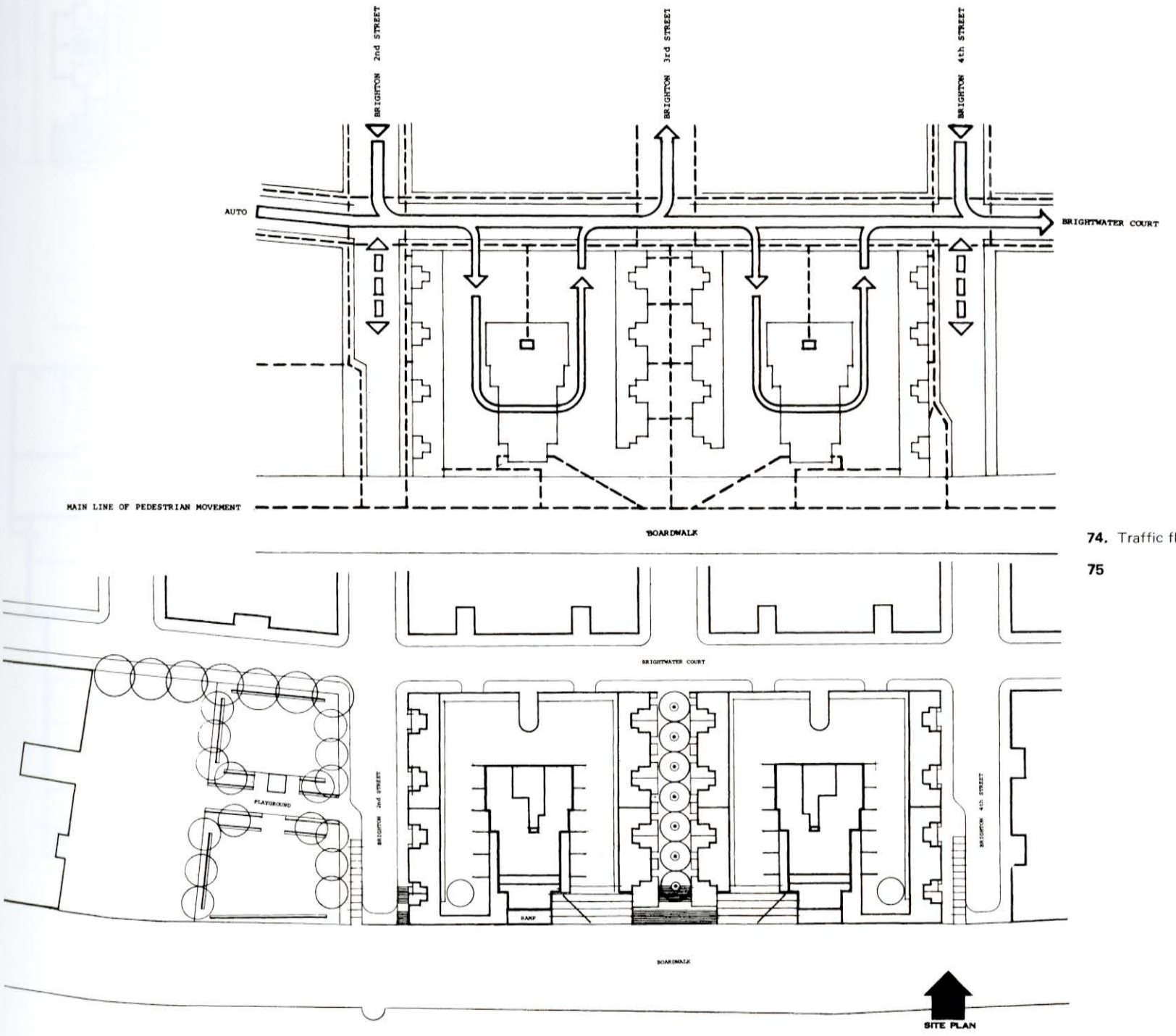
1. The [Venturi and Rauch-Kawasaki] scheme has a modesty that is appropriate to the scale and location of the project. The competition terms neither called for, nor allowed of, major social or technological reform.
2. The scheme does not detract from or demean the surrounding neighborhood. It respects, but is not bound by the existing order.
3. In our view it offers real benefits for the people who might occupy it rather than polemic satisfaction to those who consider it.
4. The method of building is intrinsically so simple that it could be built well, not meanly. We think this would contribute to the personal dignity of its occupants.
5. We think that it in no way represents "more of the same," but is instead a thoughtful use of existing possibilities. Especially we feel that the public spaces have been very well handled – in a way that provides tangible benefits to those people whom you would expect to be there.
6. Our concerns do not in any way represent a triumph for "practicality" over "beauty" but rather indicate a sincere effort to relate the criteria for judgment to the conditions of the problem. I am as uncomfortable with the word "practicality" as I am with the word "beauty"; each encourages oversimplification.

This scheme seems a well ordered, carefully considered and appropriate response to the conditions of the problem. Nor is the form unrelated to the efforts of many of our contemporaries in the arts to find new relevance in forms to which the public has become accustomed.

In short, we think that the Venturi and Rauch scheme is relevant, skillful and humane.

The competition was sponsored by the Housing and Development Administration of New York City. The program for a two-acre site on the boardwalk in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, specified a certain ratio of apartment units within 2,800,000 cubic feet with covered parking in accord with local zoning specifications. It specified as well that the design for this particular site was to be a prototype, practical for other programs and sites of this sort, to encourage good design among developers.

We designed two modified slabs perpendicular to the shore to allow a view of the sea for a majority of apartments and to cut off the view as little as possible from housing blocks behind. (Every apartment but one – not one per floor, but one per building – has a view.) The high-rise slabs sit on a pedestal of parking that is bordered on the side streets by three-bedroom row houses with little

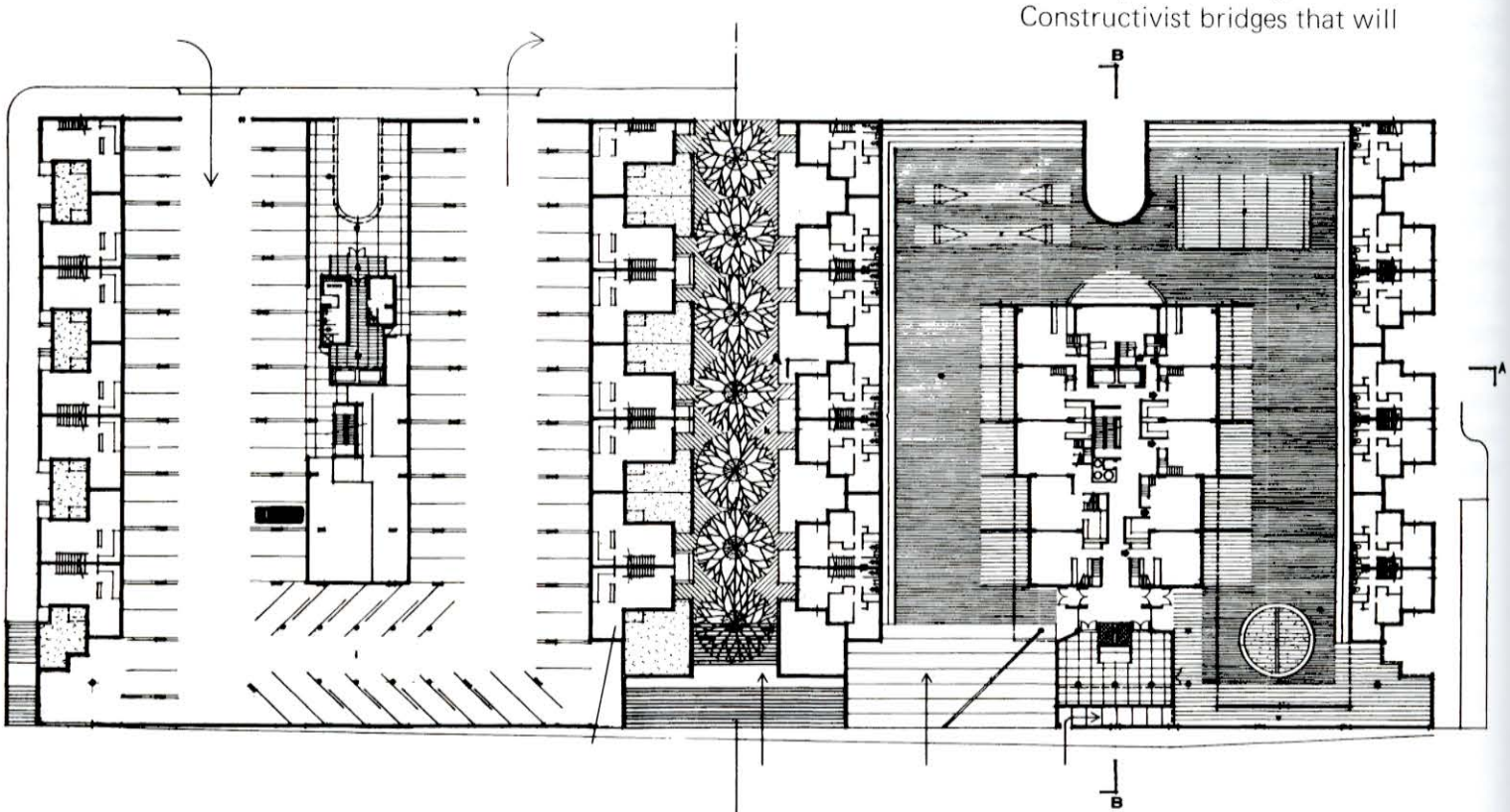


74. Traffic flow diagram

gardens for children. The top of the pedestal is for common recreation or sitting, raised above the boardwalk to achieve privacy and to maintain the view. Around the base of the slab are private yards for the duplex two-bedroom apartments that make up the first two floors of the slab.

The typical floor plans attempt to limit the lengths of the public corridors and to achieve small variations within the generally standard apartments. The slabs are stepped, in plan and elevation (a little like the RCA Building), to inflect them toward the view. The stepping of the sections creates terraces, private and common, on some of the upper floors. The configuration of the common spaces inside might encourage communication among the tenants.

It was the look of the buildings from the outside that caused the considerable partisanship and commotion on the jury. The decoration of these sheds is not in surface ornament — although we would have supplied some around the entrances if we had developed the designs — but in the symbolism of the elements, in their ordinariness. The substance and the image of these buildings is not mini-megastructural with interesting and picturesque complexities, such as zoots eight stories high and neo-Constructivist bridges that will



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

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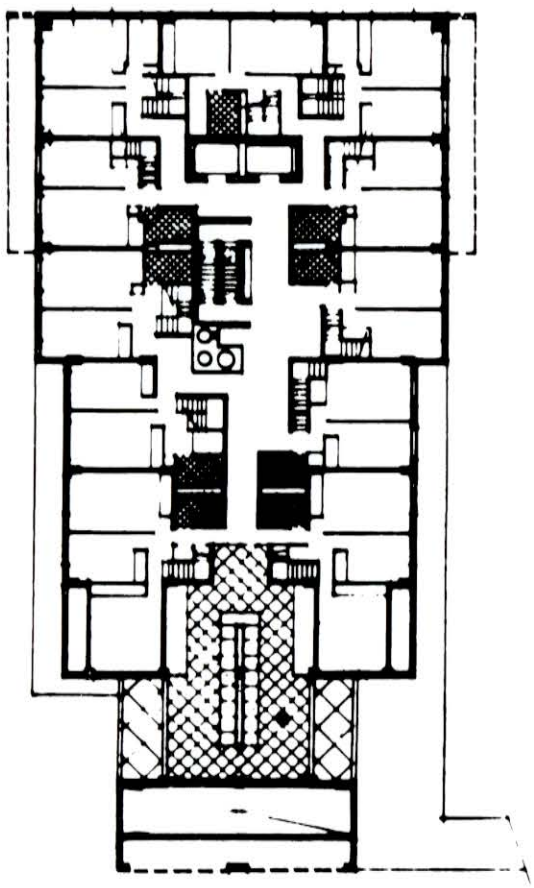
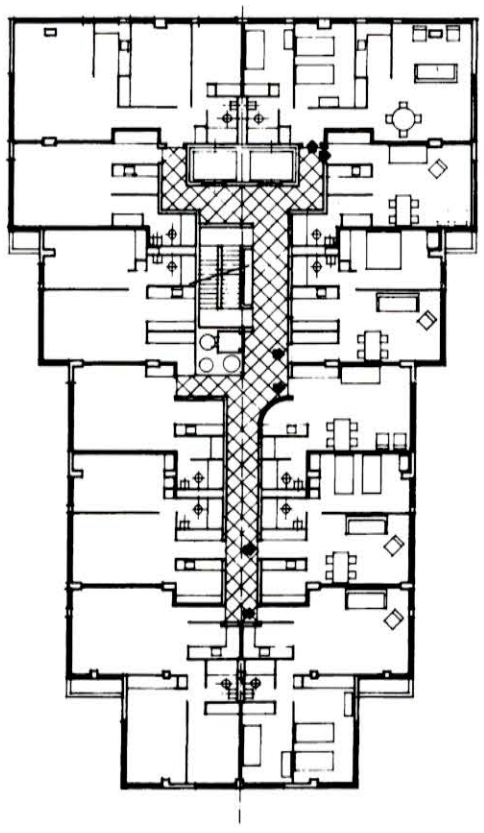
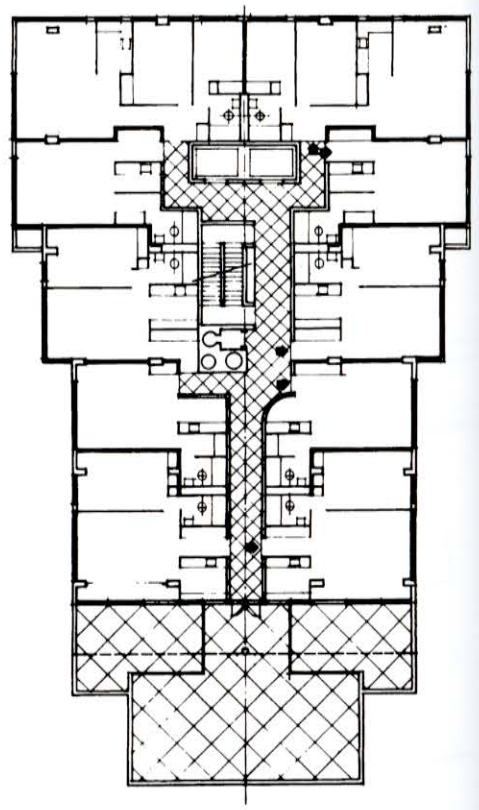


THIRD FLOOR PLAN

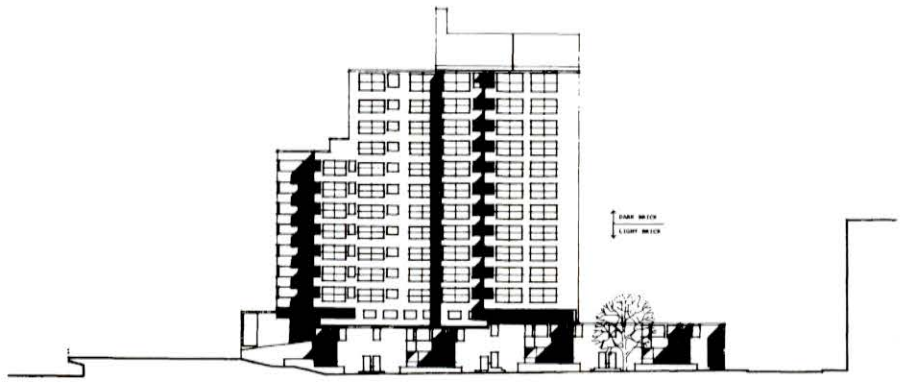


TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN - 4TH THRU 10TH

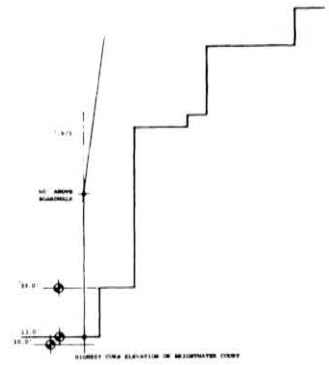


TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN - 11TH THRU 14TH

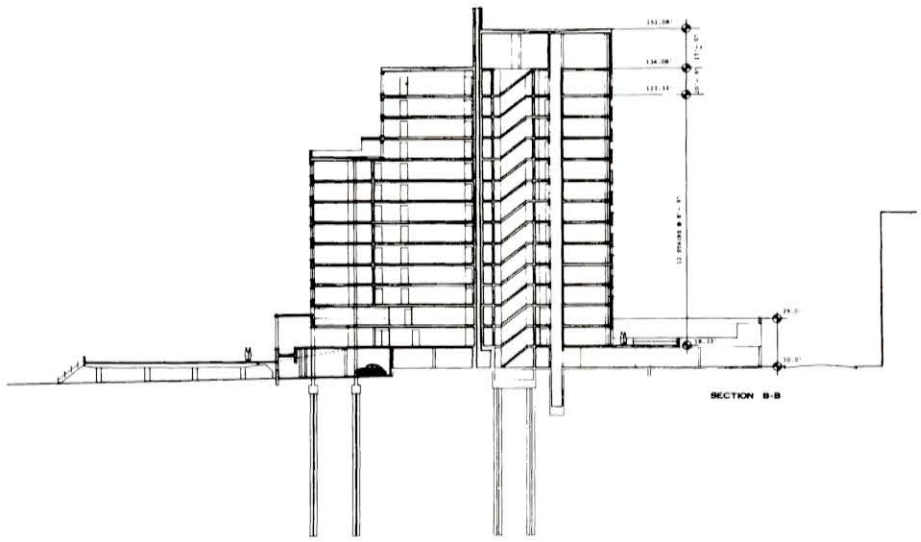
probably come out when the estimates come in. The substance and image are a combination of fairly conventional elements — the slab, the pedestal, row houses, setbacks, stock sash — done somewhat differently, often increased in scale to avoid meanness. One of the jurors said these buildings looked like Bruckner Boulevard, and that is what he had been fighting against all his life. On the other hand, the developer on the jury voted for our scheme over the others because he said it could be built.



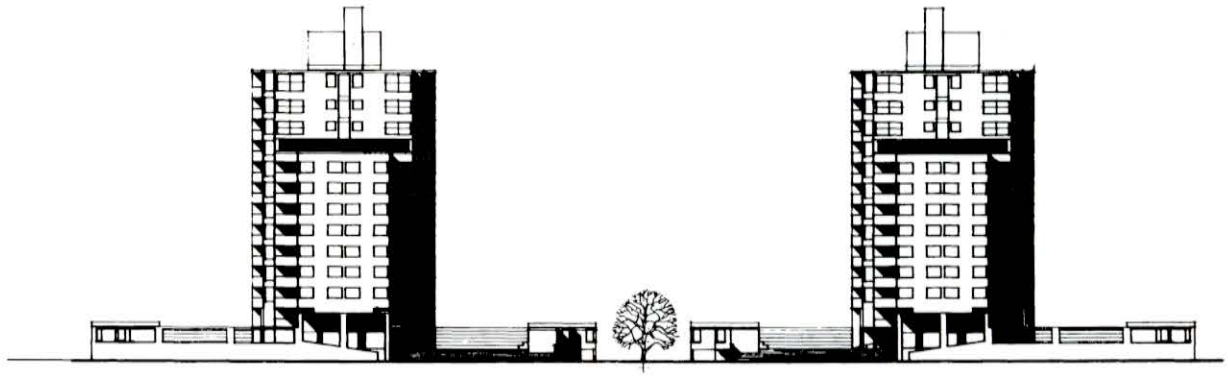
EAST ELEVATION FROM INTERIOR WAY



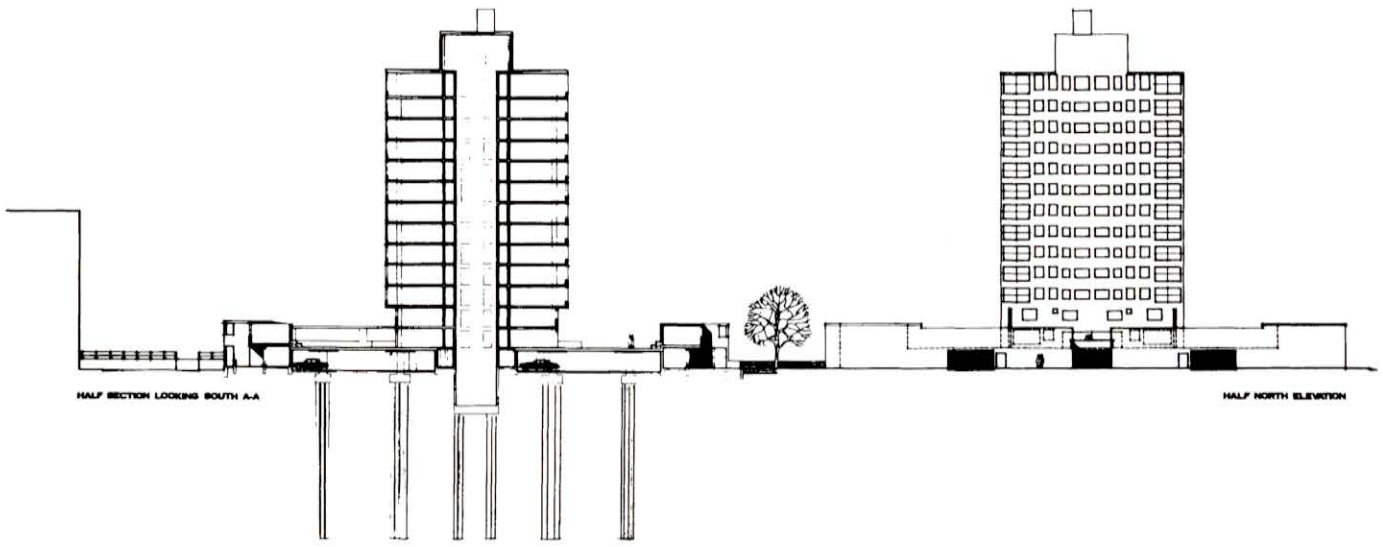
ZONING ENVELOPE



SECTION B-B



SOUTH ELEVATION



HALF SECTION LOOKING SOUTH A-A

HALF NORTH ELEVATION

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Transportation Square Office Building, Washington, D. C., 1968
(in association with Caudill Rowlett Scott, with the assistance of Denise Scott Brown, Gerod Clark, and James Greifendorf)

This office building will not be built, either in the form in which it won first prize in a Washington Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA) competition or in the form in which it was redesigned to pass the Washington Fine Arts Commission. It will not be built at all because the Fine Arts Commission design lost over 20 percent of its permitted area, and, in the year of negotiations with the Commission, construction costs rose 15 percent. Hence its economic feasibility was brought into question by one client group.

The design team was an association among Caudill Rowlett Scott, the developer Walker and Dunlop, Inc., of Washington, and ourselves. The competition requirements, the zoning restrictions, and the feasibility studies made by our associates produced the following program: Full development of the site for economic feasibility; therefore one-third coverage 90 feet high, one-third coverage 30 feet high, and one-third open land, resulting in a nine-story 430,000-square-foot, speculative office building including a three-floor office and commercial building, a plaza in the front, and subgrade parking for just over 1,000 cars.

The site was a complicated one: a residual trapezoid in L'Enfant's plan consisting of 3.7 acres at the edge of the Southwest Redevelopment area, bounded on the front by the diagonal of Maryland Avenue that mirrors Pennsylvania Avenue across the Mall and focuses on the dome of the Capitol, seven blocks to the east. It fronts on 7th and 8th streets to the east and west and on the embankment of the mainline of the B&O tracks to the south. C Street, bisecting the block east and west, was to be removed, but its numerous below-grade services had to remain. Looming behind the railroad embankment are the Nassis and HUD buildings. The surrounding blocks contain free-standing, medium-size office slabs that are scattered in the manner of urban renewal townscapes, parallel to each other and facing north and south.

Our office building is a slab because this is a good shape for a speculative office building requiring flexible interior partitions. It sits near the back of the site facing north and south to avoid the subgrade services of the ghost of C Street and to reinforce the unity of the neighborhood with a slab analogous in form and orientation to the architecture around it. The shape of the low building follows the radial diagonal of Maryland Avenue. Its facade lines the street and directs the space along the street – except for the interruption of the entrance plaza – in the traditional manner of dense urban architecture and like that found along Pennsylvania Avenue.

The upper part of our complex therefore is Ville Radieuse – if not Los Angeles sprawl – frankly corresponding to its Southwest Urban Renewal context of parallel slabs in vast space, independent of the street pattern and, especially, of the radial axial avenues of Washington. The lower part, on the other hand, is Baron Haussmann. This is the part pedestrians see at close range; it is "interesting" in order to counteract the vacuous automobile space of the existing landscape circa 1984. In a fragmentary way it revives the directional space of the axial street and focuses on the white dome at its head. In the plaza are places to walk and sit and meet. This brings customers to the stores along the routes to the office building entrance.

The form of this complex – to a great extent a result of economic, legal, and urban design requirements mentioned earlier – acquired characteristics antithetical to tenets of Modern architecture, but all right with us after we thought about them. For example, the slab takes its shape from the constraints of the site; that is, the office building had to cover one-third of the site, be about 90 feet wide, be parallel to and behind the former C Street, and yet fit within the diagonal boundary of the railroad. Therefore the southwest corner of the slab is cut off. There is a long tradition of expedient exception and distortion of conventional systems to accommodate the exigencies of an urban site, from the street plan of almost any European city to the Pension Building of Alvar Aalto, whose zig-zagged bays we copied. These things, done from strength rather than from weakness, gave tension and vitality to historical architecture. (We dwell on this because of the particular offense that slab gave Gordon Bunshaft of the Washington Fine Arts Commission.)

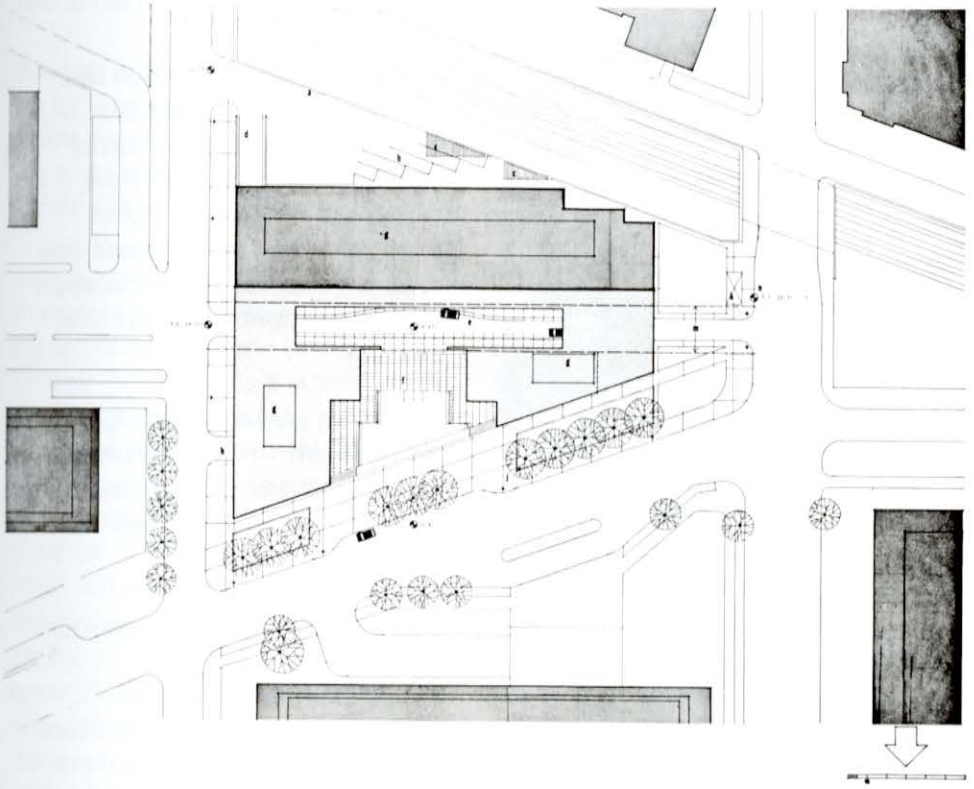
The relation between our low and high buildings was neither simple nor complex enough for the Commission. The low and the high are not discrete through separation or articulation in the Miesian manner of Lever House or, on the other hand, integral in the complex manner of late Modern Articulated. An orthodox Modern architect would want to insert a big shadow joint between the low and high blocks or, at the other extreme, step the section, because a dogleg in section and in side elevation spells formal ineptitude by Modern standards despite programmatic justification and structural feasibility. The view of the roof from the slab is bad, and we worried about that, but separating the low and the high or rearranging them on the site would not solve that problem.

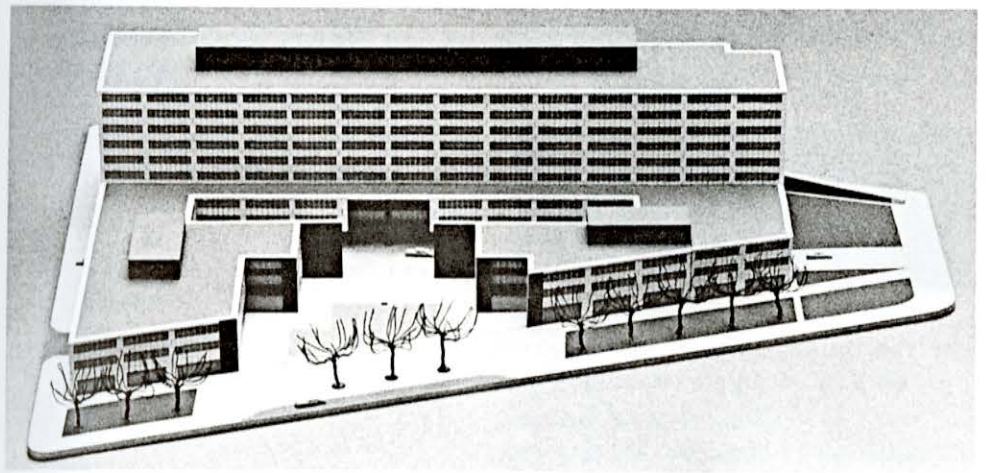
The structural bay system is the same in size and proportion in the low part and the high part. Since the Swiss Pavilion, a dictum of Modern architecture has been that low wings must be different in structure and form from the high buildings of which they are part. But in this project varying forms above grade are manifestations in some way of the parking garage below grade that encompasses the whole site; the structural grid meshes the consistent pattern of cars and aisles below with offices, shops, and plaza above. This makes for an architectural complex that looks like one block with sections removed rather than a combination of blocks sitting in space.

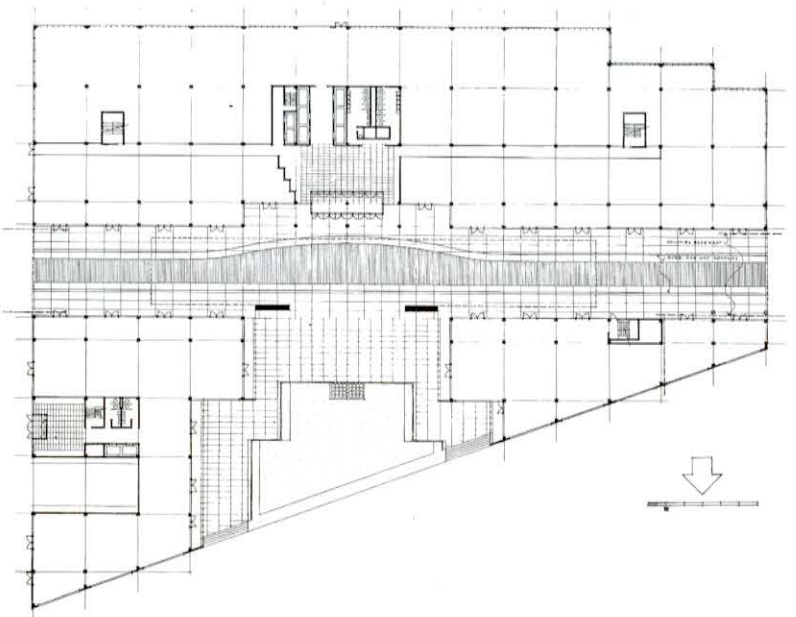
The almost consistent module all over the site is reflected in the facades where the same pattern holds in the nine-story slab and the three-story wings. The resulting languid effect contrasts with the often pseudo-dynamic structural tension of today's post-Corbusier building complexes. Again, this does not sound exceptional, but it irritated the Commission that the facades "looked like wallpaper."

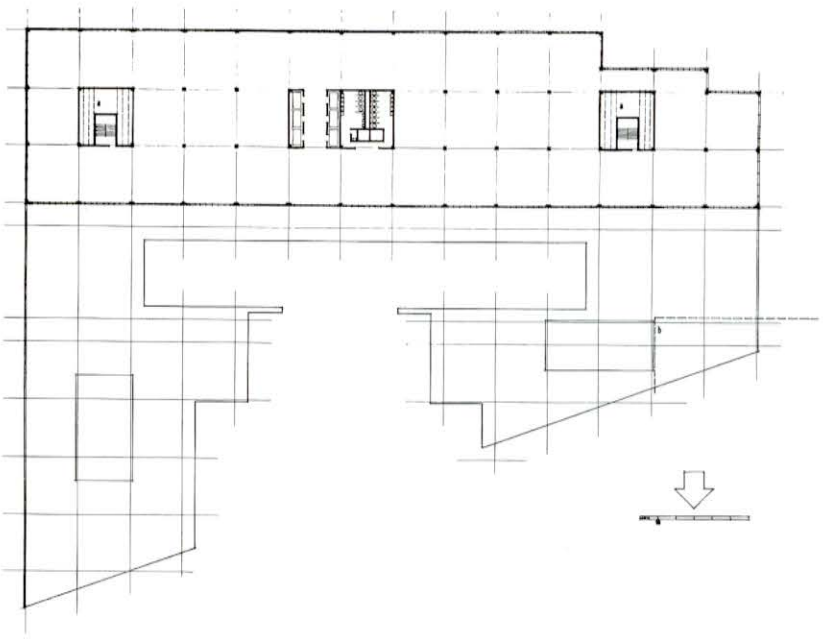
Also the proportions of the facades were 1930s, Modern, horizontal, and flush, rather than the Commission's preferred Washington style for the 1960s, which is 1950s, Mies, vertical, and plastic (the plasticity not Mies, but Corbu via Pei). Our model was Edward L. Barnes' facade for 20 State Street in Boston, which demonstrates that the conventional strip window of traditional Modern architecture is still good for the flexible interiors of an office building. We made the heights of windows and spandrels the same to increase the abstract quality of the facade's pattern of horizontal stripes and decrease thereby its comparability with the facade of the federal building across the street. In the 90-foot permitted height, our building contained nine tight floors to maximize rentable area. An abstract pattern would hold its own better than little windows and spandrels against the generously scaled six stories that the federal government can afford to provide in the same height.

The building is clad in white marble to match the building across the street. The module of its very deep joints corresponds to the module of the aluminum mullions of the sash emphasizing the abstract overall pattern. We used verde antique marble to decorate more explicitly the front faces of the zigzag walls of the entrance plaza. These contracting panels follow the module of the structural bays: The last zag on each side is a purely decorative pylon framing the entrance of the office building. The model for our entrance plaza was the receding and contracting drops of a Baroque stage. The model for the axial focus on a vast facade with receding wings was the symmetrical, slightly pompous, yet witty, front of an Elizabethan manor. It was perhaps this approach that dealt the final blow to our design. You do not approach a classic Greek temple or classic Modern slab (which this was supposed to be) axially at its center — especially not by way of a contracting, symmetrical forecourt, or, as Bunshaft laconically described it, "All this little scratchy stuff around."





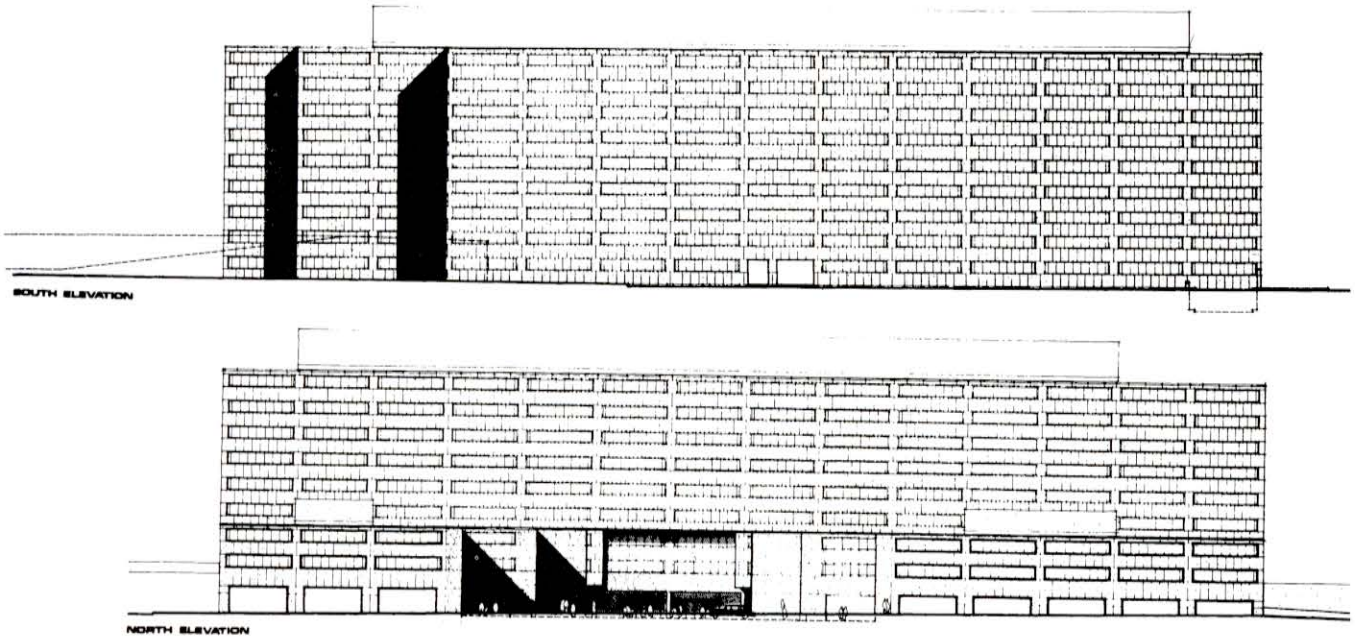




82. Site plan

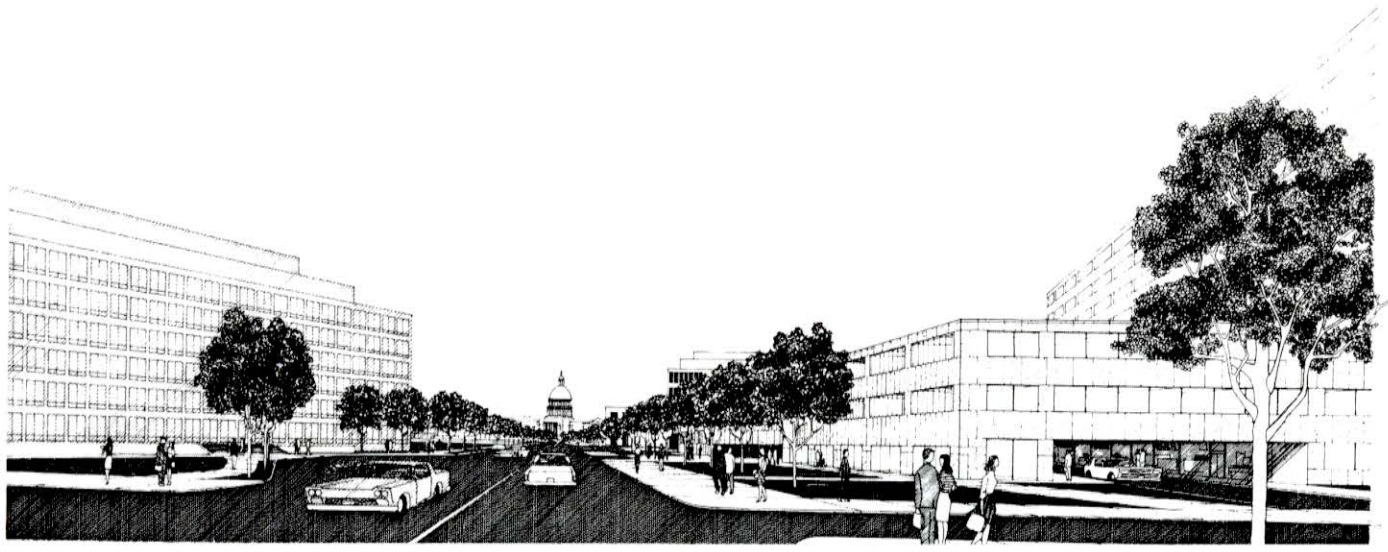
83. Ground floor plan

85. Plan floor 4-9

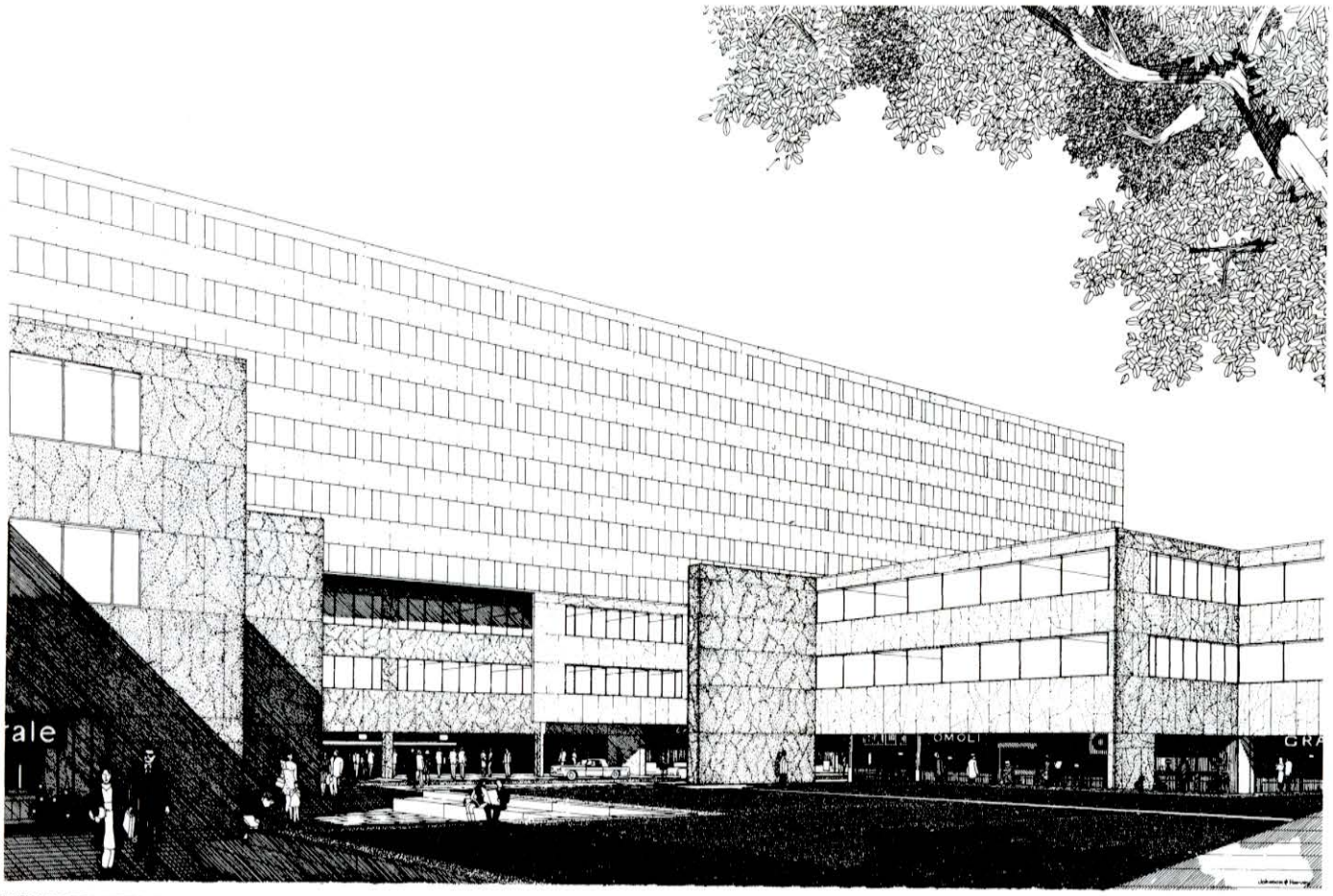


SOUTH ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION



VIEW TOWARD CAPITOL



VIEW SOUTH INSIDE PLAZA

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The awarding jury had called our scheme "very droll and human," but the Washington Fine Arts Commission rejected it as "ugly and ordinary." The architects and developers were not present at the first Commission session where the Commission rejected the design largely because its members disagreed with the program of the competition, or rather with the forms to which the program led. Some comments of the Commission, mainly from Commissioner Bunshaft, were:

Let me say very simply what's all this complication of low buildings and high? Why can't the buildings be put right in the middle?

We think there ought to be just one massive building, right in the middle here, not some building that has corners knocked off. . . .

Let them build up one massive building with retail all around it.

. . . a nice big open space with a diamond [?] going through it, it would be a piece of architecture. We are talking about architecture and planning.

By building the lower section here in the sense that it knocks this space in something of this sort of shape, by getting rid of all these, putting it all in once basic block, you can see really on the model how simple it would be, where this would be a very nice space with two sides integrated.

I think what we talked about, one building, flatter or whatever it is, getting this in one space, instead of all this little scratchy stuff around.

This is not a design in our opinion.

That the Commission had approved the program which had been previously submitted to it and that another governmental agency, in the form of the jury appointed by the RLA, had already approved the design, was grandly dismissed by Bunshaft as a mere legal problem. "This building will be around a long time."

The second meeting was termed by the Commission an "executive session." The public and press were barred, and transcripts were not made available to the architects. Hence, the following excerpts are based on our memory:

Gordon Bunshaft:
You talk very well, but nothing you can say can make your building anything but ugly and ordinary. . . . We need no lessons in history from you, Mr. Venturi, and your comparison of your building with Alvar Aalto's is an insult to Alvar Aalto. . . . Philosophy? There's no philosophy in this building. . . . We have made up our minds about your building; it is a courtesy to you that we hear you at all.

Hideo Sasaki:
You talk of accommodation in design, Mr. Venturi, of how accommodating to the difficult conditions of the site has improved your building. Now you should accommodate to us because the Commission is your client.

John Walton (Chairman):
Will that woman be quiet. I know how to run my own meetings.

Bunshaft further suggested putting the commercial area underground following the precedent of the economically ailing commercial area in L'Enfant Plaza.

Because our client needed the project to proceed quickly and because of the agonizing precedent of the Mitchell-Giurgola firm's attempts to modify their prizewinning but rejected design for the A.I.A. headquarters, we decided to redesign our project completely, to follow the letter, if not the spirit, of the "law" laid down for us by the Commission. We shortened and flattened the slab to complete its offending corner at the expense of its proportions and internal plan. We shoved the commercial under the plaza and made a huge piazza of pure space. But the piazza was really a big, wide ramp, and it still axially penetrated the slab at the side. And the commercial signs still existed, hidden in a moat.

"We felt the overall scheme was greatly improved," said a letter from the Chairman:
We now look forward to seeing an imaginative development of the architectural expression of the building. Unfortunately, the sketches that we saw showed a very bland and unrelieved treatment of the facade. In fact, there was little difference between the paving pattern and the building itself. Surely the architect can do better than this.

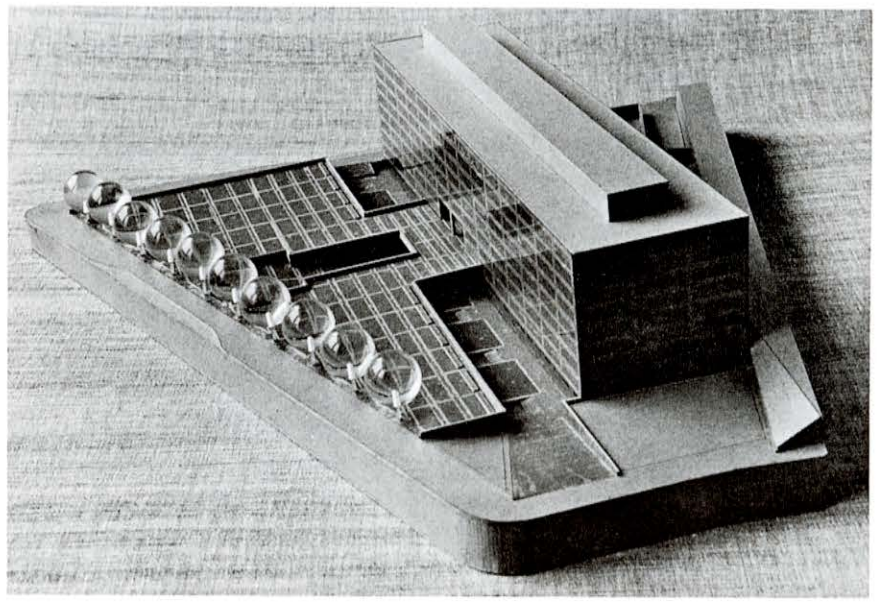
Bunshaft said,
. . . We disapprove the exterior one hundred percent. We don't like it at all. It is very coarse, has no character of any sort . . . a sort of nonentity of architecture. I think the indication of signs and things is a deliberate effort to be anti-design, to sort of let everybody have a ball. The grayness of the building, coarseness of joining and detailing — I think you might say we think it is ugly and I think that's about all we have to say.

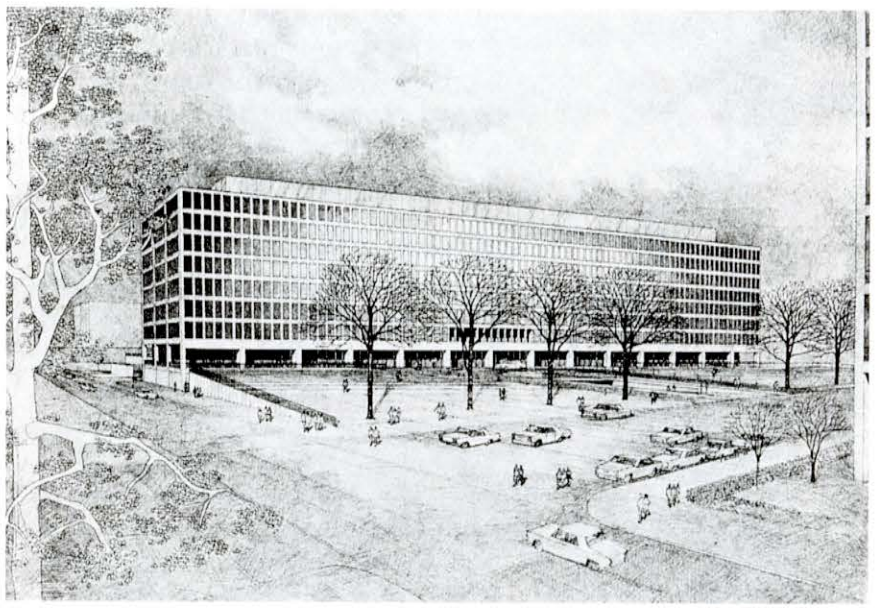
At the fourth meeting we tried to show that sophisticated architects had carefully designed the proportions and details of the facade to look ordinary because the extraordinary building in this neighborhood is at the end of Maryland Avenue with a big dome on top. Aline Saarinen noted that our elevations looked like wallpaper.

Bunshaft continued:
We all listened to [Venturi's] spiel at the previous meeting. . . . I think the position in a nutshell is for an architect to make a very good building for that site not, in his career, to do a building that is different than the one he did before, or that is different from what is au courant. . . . Remember, this is Washington.

At the fifth meeting we presented the design that passed. It followed the spirit of the law.

The Kafkaesque aura, the personal insults, the questionable professional ethics, and the superficial process of review perpetrated by this particular board are revealed in our account of our experience. The ominous implications, in our opinion, of the growing influence of design review boards in the United States, their deadening effect on the form of our landscape through their simplistic promotion of unity and beautification, and the dubious constitutionality of their methods are discussed in the Appendix.

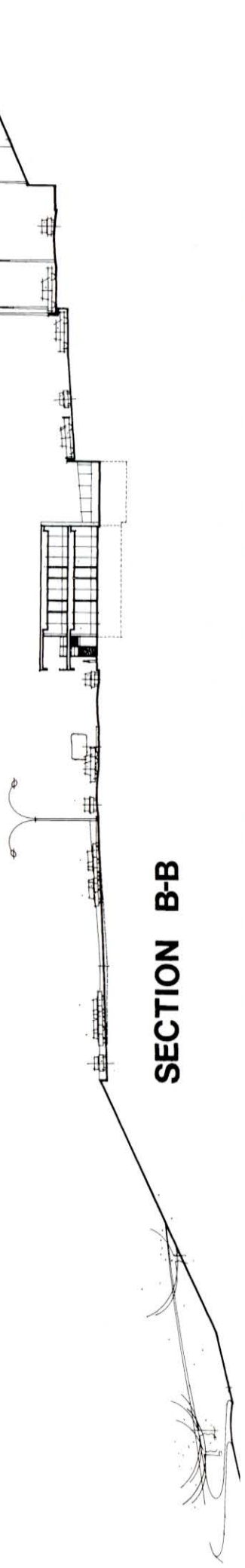




90. Modified submission to Washington Fine Arts Commission

91. Final accepted submission to Washington Fine Arts Commission

Thousand Oaks Civic Center Competition, 1969
(in association with Steven Izenour and Tony Pett, with the assistance of Denise Scott Brown)



SECTION B-B

This description is taken from an article in Architecture Design, March 1971.

The competition program called for an initial stage, including the City Hall and Chamber of Commerce, that was modest and restrictive in area and in functional relationships; it called for a second, looser phase that expanded the City Hall and added new departments and extra parking. The community wanted a design in which "the individual having business with the city should be able to transact that business with the least possible waste of time, shuttling between offices," but also a design with a "certain dignity of expression and sufficient interest to endure public attention and admiration." It was to be a "permanent structure which will be likely to serve the community for upwards of a half a century."

By contrast, Thousand Oaks itself is a sprawling, growing, impermanent California suburb. It is a "city" with few of the identifying characteristics or traditional urban forms of the East Coast or European city, having grown in twelve years from a rural settlement of a thousand oaks and two thousand people scattered throughout the Conejo Valley to an urban region of fifty thousand (to quote the program) "white collar, affluent, politically conservative and sixty percent Republican" citizens. The site chosen for the Civic Center was a rolling hill overlooking the Ventura Freeway between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara.

From the road map, Thousand Oaks seems to lack an imposed geometric order. The movement system appears to have developed as a mediation between traffic flow, property rights, and geography. This American suburban, roadside landscape has emerged from ignominy to be the inspiration of artists and film makers. We attempted to use its vocabulary in an artistic and civic way. Our aim was in part didactic: "City Hall" should lead in demonstrating how the everyday landscape can be enhanced using the practical tools at hand rather than exotic and expensive imports. We tried to make civic architecture out of low, modest buildings, parking lots, symbols people like and can understand, and the signing systems they know from driving the freeway.

In a medieval town, a civic place is defined by the important buildings that enclose it. In a California suburb, a civic place is located, rather than defined, by signs and symbolic images that can be perceived at high speeds across the vast spaces of the highway, rather than by the modest buildings in big parking lots required in the competition program. We sought signs and symbols that even a child could understand and enjoy, related to the name of the community and the traditional architecture of town halls. Town halls have towers and flags, and the "Thousand Oaks" are live oaks, native to California.

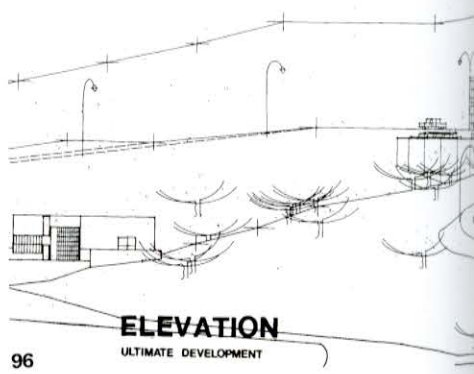
Our building for the first stage is unassuming units of modular construction, designed for maximum flexibility and growth, a kind of camp Mies. It changes at one ceremonial point, at the entrance to the council chamber. Here it evolves "poetically" from the same modular unit to form a tower, which is a live oak and which becomes in turn a flagpole. On ceremonial occasions you enter the complex by walking under the live oak. The name "Thousand Oaks" etched lightly on the hillside berm resembles the efforts of high-school children on other California hillsides or the flowered parterre of a Victorian courthouse. The words "Thousand Oaks" substitute a symbolic image of Thousand Oaks for a nonexistent civic skyline and for the soon-to-be bulldozed oaks. The impact comes from the meaning of the words and only secondarily from the architectural forms of another California suburb. Three small stars point up the larger meaning. All of the signs are big, to be read across vast space from moving cars, but are carefully detailed as part of the civic architecture.

Buildings and parking areas go with the contours, causing minimum intrusion on the landscape. Departments are zoned in functionally related groups, and each department is identified in tastefully lettered signs on the balconies and fascias to be read like today's special on the A&P windows. Buildings and automobiles are face to face as at the supermarket, to provide maximum accessibility of all departments to users. However, by twisting our "civic strip" up the hill and around a phony flying freeway ramp, we gave a sense of size and monumentality from the highway through superimposition.

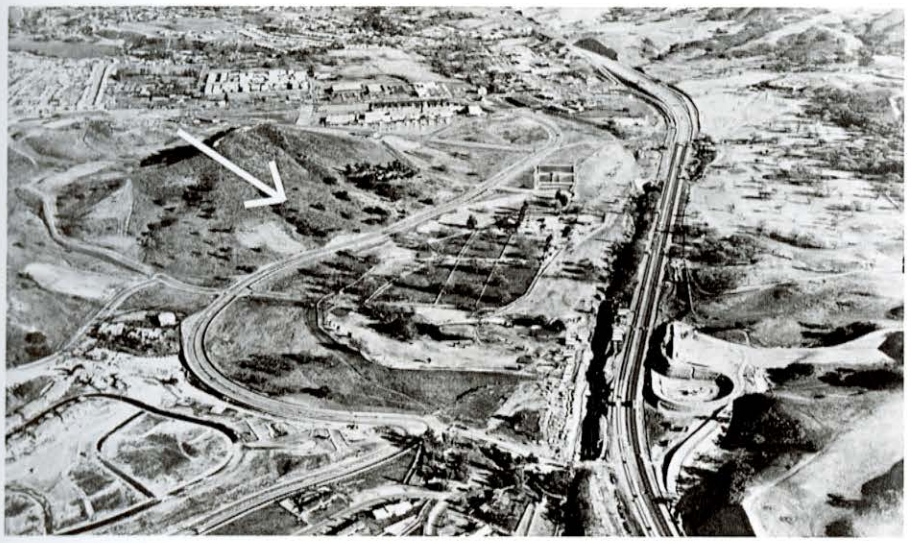
By day the tree tower is only lightly defined against its background like a church tower. By night the live oak is etched in neon and will stand out small but bright against the dark hillside.

We used a natural declivity to provide a vestigial ceremonial pedestrian greenway ascending the hill through the complex and ending in a small paved piazza and open amphitheater at the Civic Arts complex. In this way we hoped to save most of the important trees on the site. We regarded the parking as part of the civic architecture. Although monumental through its scale and size, it is terraced to the land to avoid excavation and has differentiated parking arrangements to suit different needs. We used the conventional elements of the highway — light posts, signs, curbs, ramps, and turning islands — to reinforce the urban reference. For the rest, we left the landscape untouched — a beautiful bare California hillside.

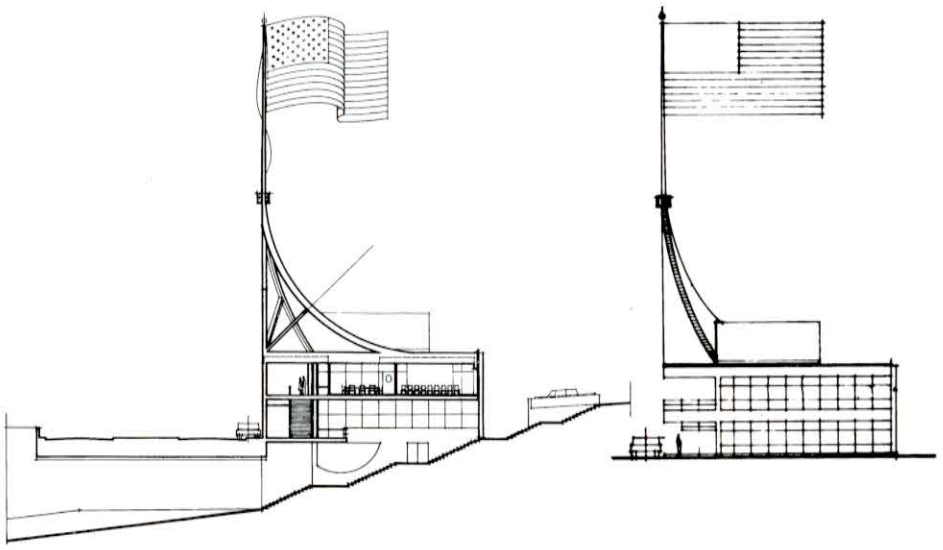
Our design has learned from and comments upon Las Vegas and the A&P parking lot, more specifically than we would want or expect in the developed project, because a building should be more than the embodiment of a theory. At least as important as the neon oak, in this attempt to use the strip vernacular civically, is the effort to civilize the parking lot. But perhaps this essay in suburban-commercial imagery was misdirected because its image was not the image Thousand Oaks had of itself. At the public showing our entry provoked the comment, "It's cute, but are they really serious?" Perhaps a better point of departure and at least as rich a source for inspiration and comment would have been suburban housing, rather than the suburban strip.



ELEVATION
ULTIMATE DEVELOPMENT



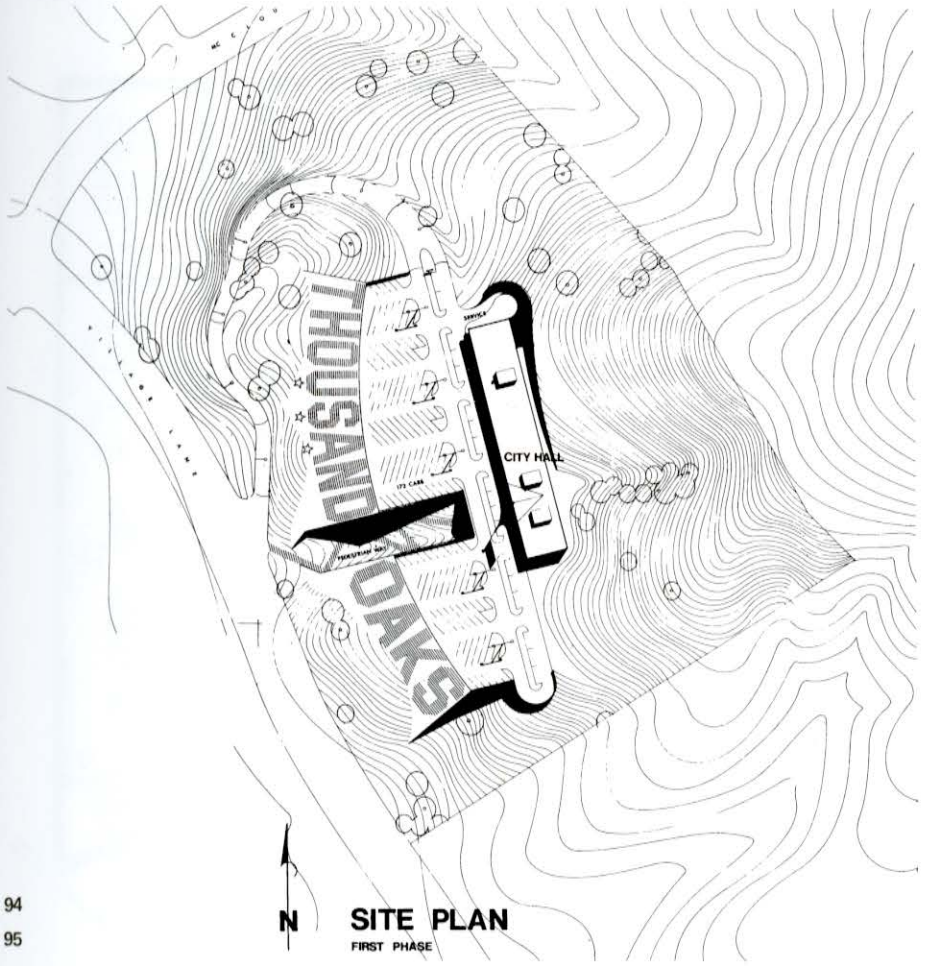
92. The site



SECTION
CITY HALL

ELEVATION
CITY HALL

98



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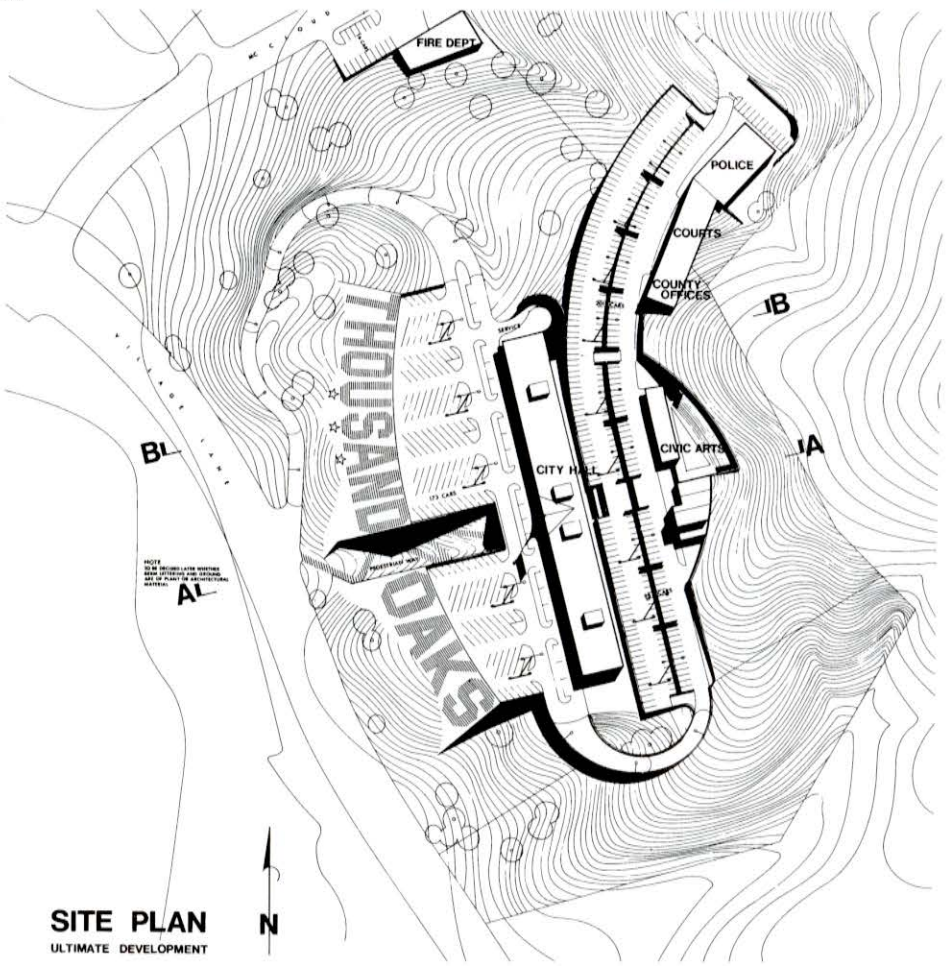
N **SITE PLAN**
FIRST PHASE



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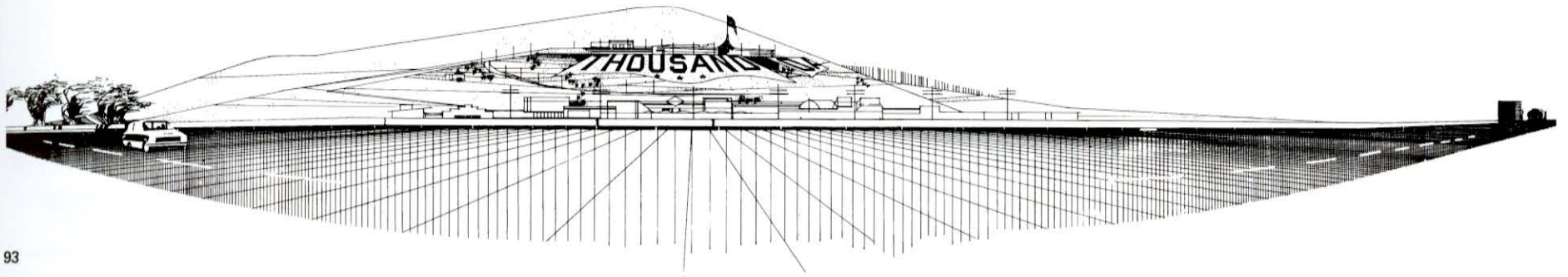
SITE PLAN **N**
ULTIMATE DEVELOPMENT



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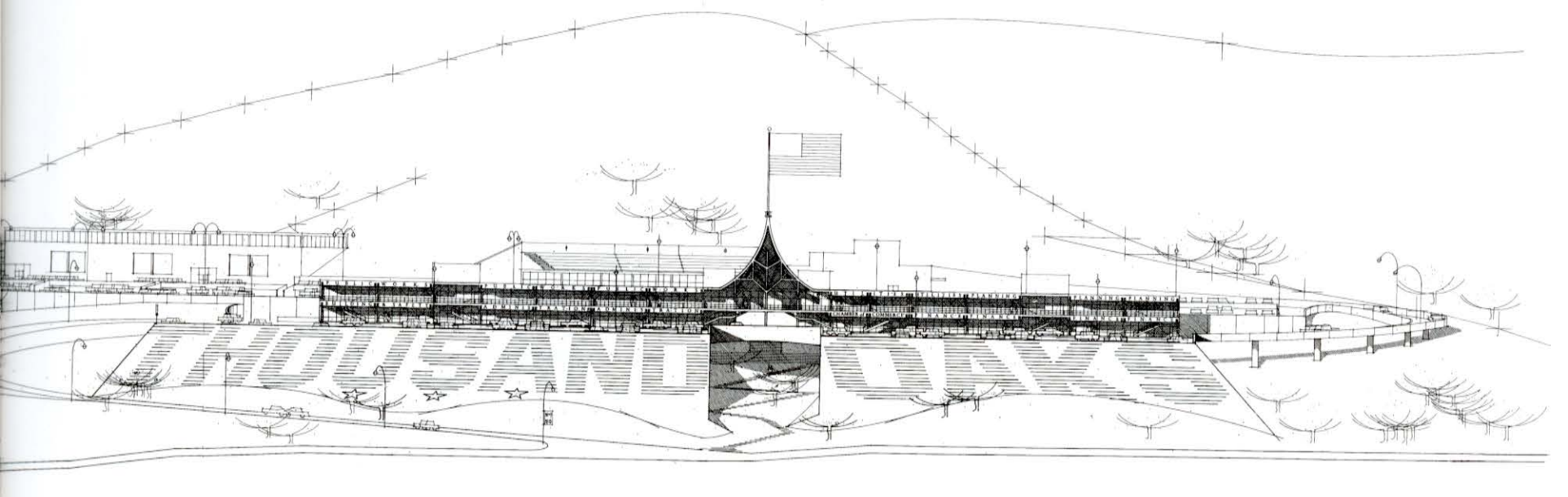
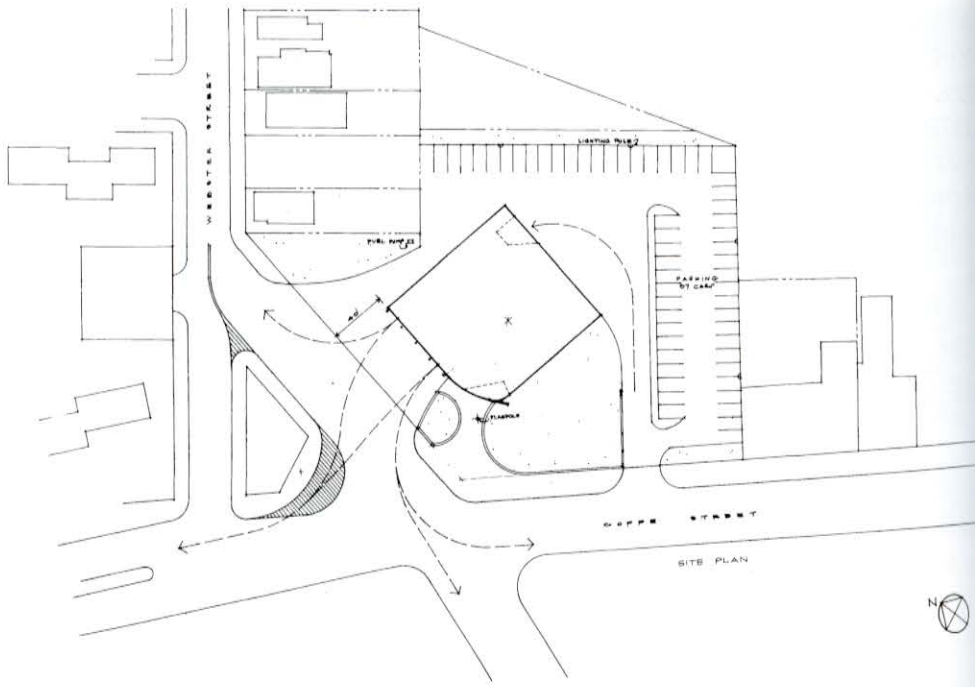
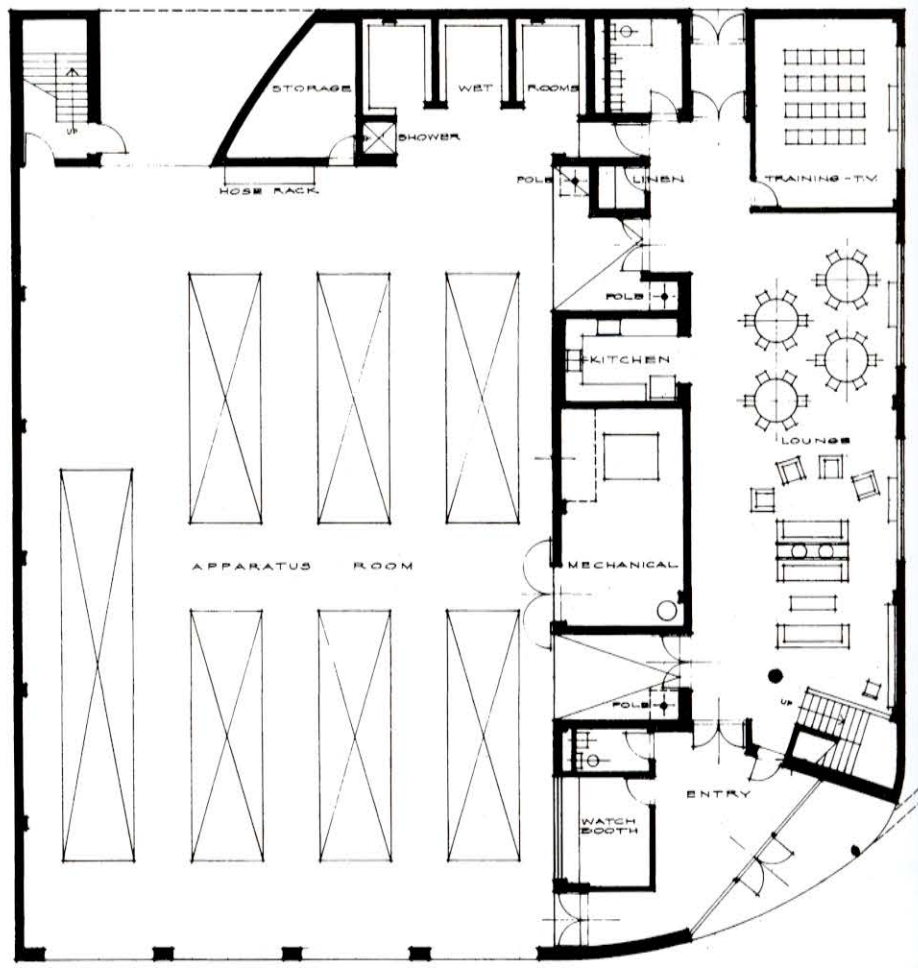
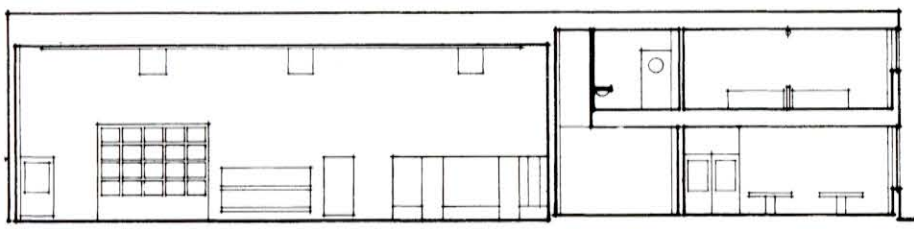


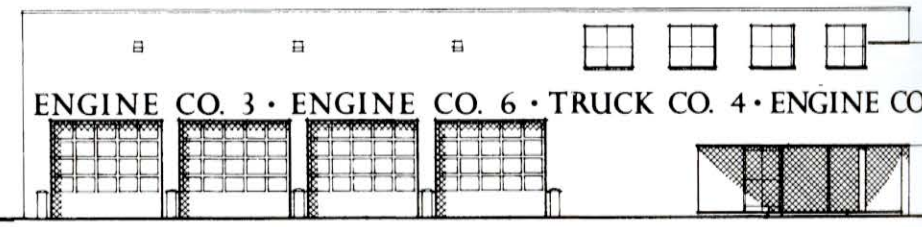
Dixwell Fire Station, New Haven, Connecticut, 1970
(with the assistance of Arthur Jones)

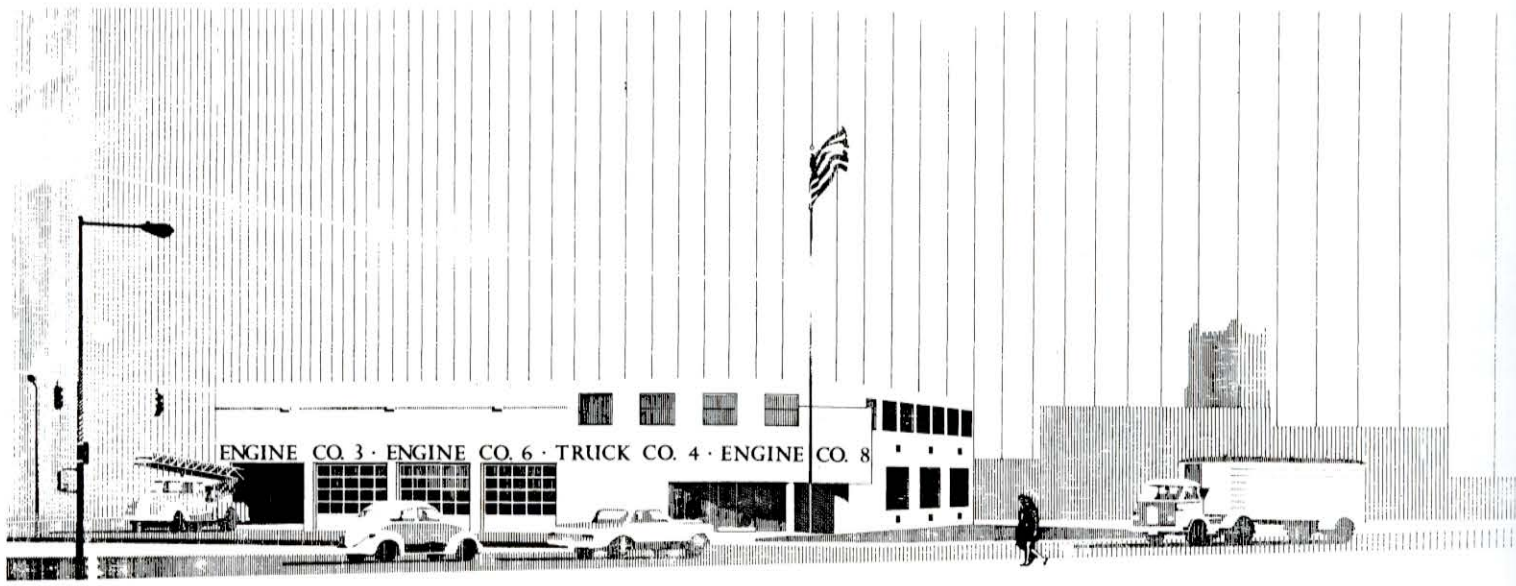
The program for this Fire Station is like that for Fire Station No. 4 in Columbus, Indiana, except it is bigger, there is no hose tower, and the site is on a corner at the edge of downtown rather than on a highway in the suburbs. The building is simple in form — there are no wings or changes in roof height — and big in scale — it contains big elements in a simple bulk. It sits diagonally across the corner to permit efficient egress by the trucks, and the living quarters face south. There are letters on the facade to identify it in the traditional manner of civic buildings, but when they reach the corner, the wall they are on disengages and cantilevers to make a brick signboard. This corner of the building is also rounded to become the one architectural feature. This enhances the corner and ties the two street facades together. The ordinariness of this building, as in Fire Station No. 4, works also to keep the job within the tight budget.











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103

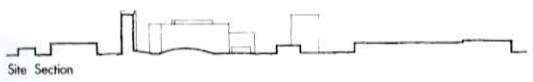
A Feasibility Study for Lawton Plaza, New Rochelle, New York, 1970
(with the assistance of Arthur Jones, Paul Hirshorn, and Denise Scott Brown)

The planning of Lawton Plaza was promoted by the Urban Development Corporation and the City of New Rochelle. The design is based on the consultants' analyses of transportation, commercial and housing markets, and relocation needs. The program called for commercial, office, and housing development to enhance two joined blocks of the deteriorating downtown area. We chose to ring the superblock with buildings following the building line, with commercial buildings facing out on three sides to stimulate interaction with existing stores and the new mall to the east. An office block lines the north side connecting with an existing bank, and a housing slab — 400 units that can be built in two stages — lines the east side along Memorial Highway, an artery with no commercial building on it. The orientation of this slab suits the good views toward Long Island Sound about a mile away. A city library at the southwest corner incorporates shops too. There are parking structures below the office slab and across Memorial Drive.

What we did not do in this project was create a megastructural unity or a grand architectural image or even a pedestrian plaza in a superblock surrounded by inward-looking buildings. Since an assumption of this scheme was staged development and possibly several developers, we made the surrounding buildings frankly different from each other architecturally. The interior of the block is the unifying image: a city park in the Romantic tradition with the artificial naturalness of a jardin Anglais, featuring picturesquely sited trees, rocks, winding paths, and a large hill in the center visible between the breaks in the surrounding buildings. We tried to make the imagery not architecturally urbanistic but pretty and memorable, a small but intense amenity to symbolize downtown renewal.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM **A**

Illustrative Site Plan



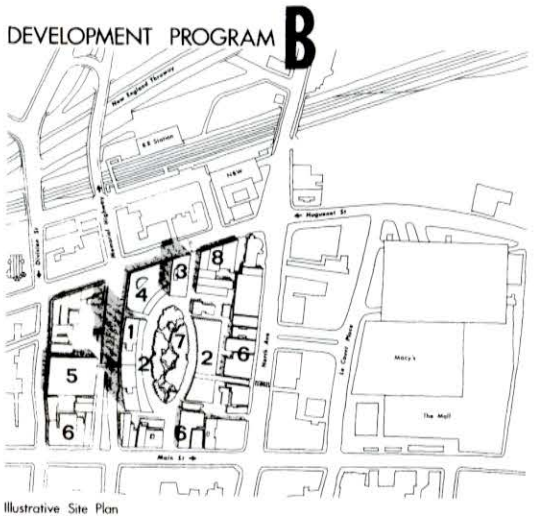
Site Section

1 Housing **400 UNITS**
2 New Retail **40,000 S.F.**
3 Office **400,000 S.F.**
4 Library **50,000 S.F.**
5 Parking Structure **535 CARS**
6 Existing Retail
7 Park **142,000 S.F.**
8 Future Park Extension

104

105

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM **B**



Illustrative Site Plan

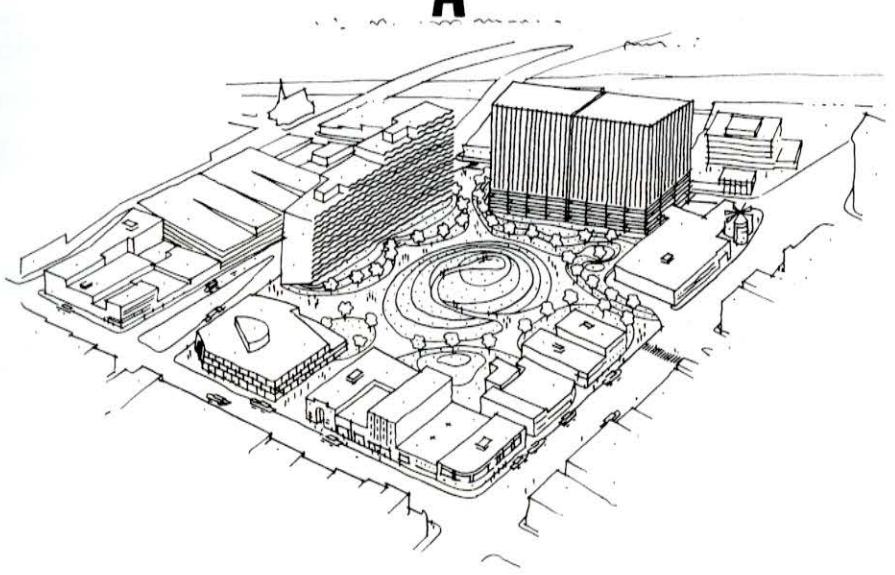
Site Section

1 Housing **400 UNITS**
2 New Retail **50,000 S.F.**
3 Office **75,000 S.F.**
4 Library **50,000 S.F.**
5 Parking Structure **310 CARS**
6 Existing Retail
7 Plaza **72,000 S.F.**
8 Site of Proposed Office Building by others

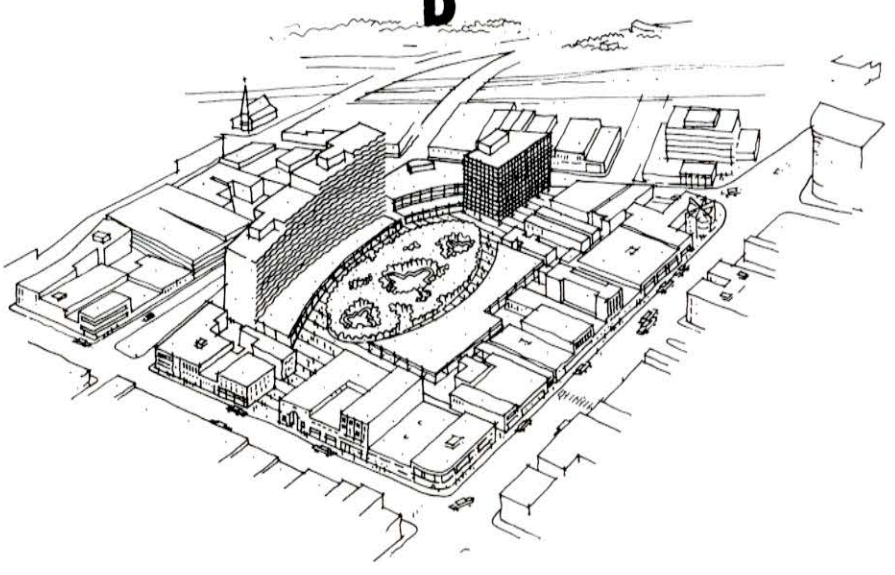
106

107

A



B



The Humanities and Social Sciences Buildings, State University of New York, Purchase, New York, 1968 and 1970
(with the assistance of Gerod Clark, Arthur Jones, Denise Scott Brown, and David Vaughan)

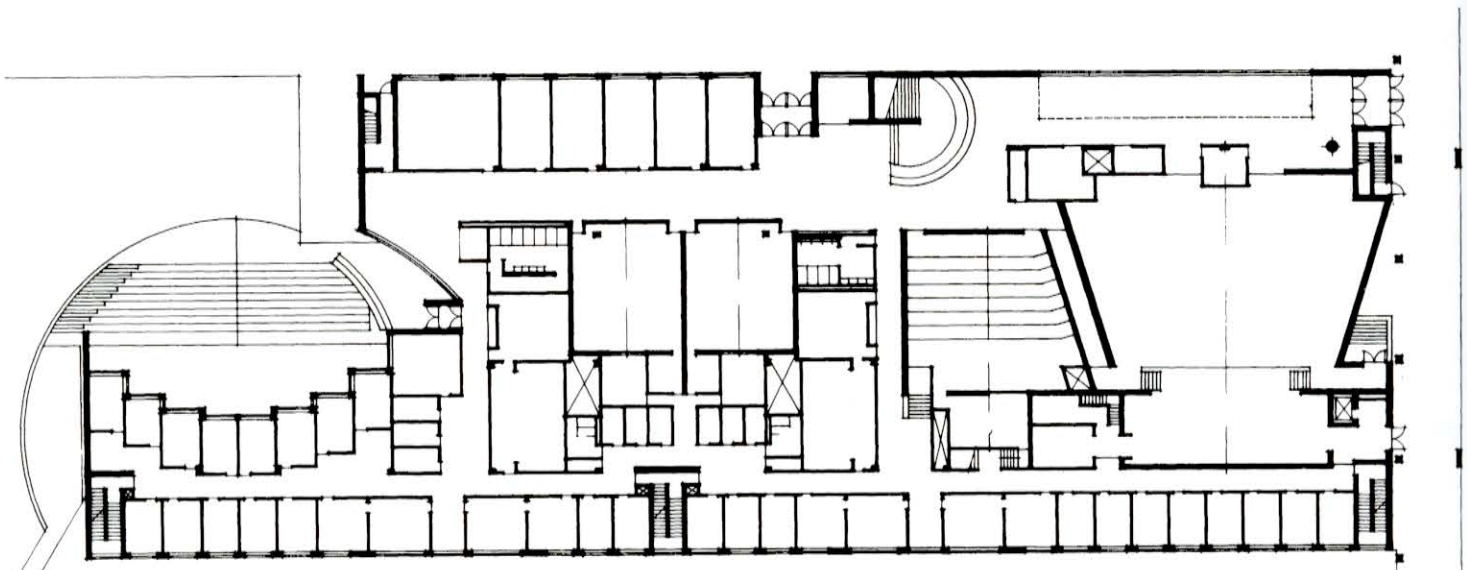
Two buildings to be located among others by Edward L. Barnes, Philip Johnson, The Architects Collaborative, Paul Rudolph, Charles Gwathmey, and Gunnar Birkerts, all designed at about the same time and all conforming to the campus plan by Barnes. The college emphasizes the visual and performing arts; its site is a rural estate in Westchester County, and Barnes's site plan for the instructional buildings resembles that of the University of Virginia – an arcade, U-shaped in plan, with wide spans, fronts eight "pavilions." In place of Virginia's rotunda at the closed end of the U is a performing arts center by Barnes and in the mall, below grade, is his library. Gwathmey's dormitory is beyond this complex in the field below.

108. Campus plan by Edward Larrabee Barnes, F.A.I.A.

Barnes established a system to promote unity among diversity in the rapid development of this big complex. The front of each pavilion must extend an allotted 130 feet along the arcade; 30-foot pedestrian streets run between buildings suggesting an urban proximity among buildings. All architects are required to use the same dark mauve brick, the same aluminum anodizing for their sash, and the same coping detail; in other respects they may design individually within these close quarters.

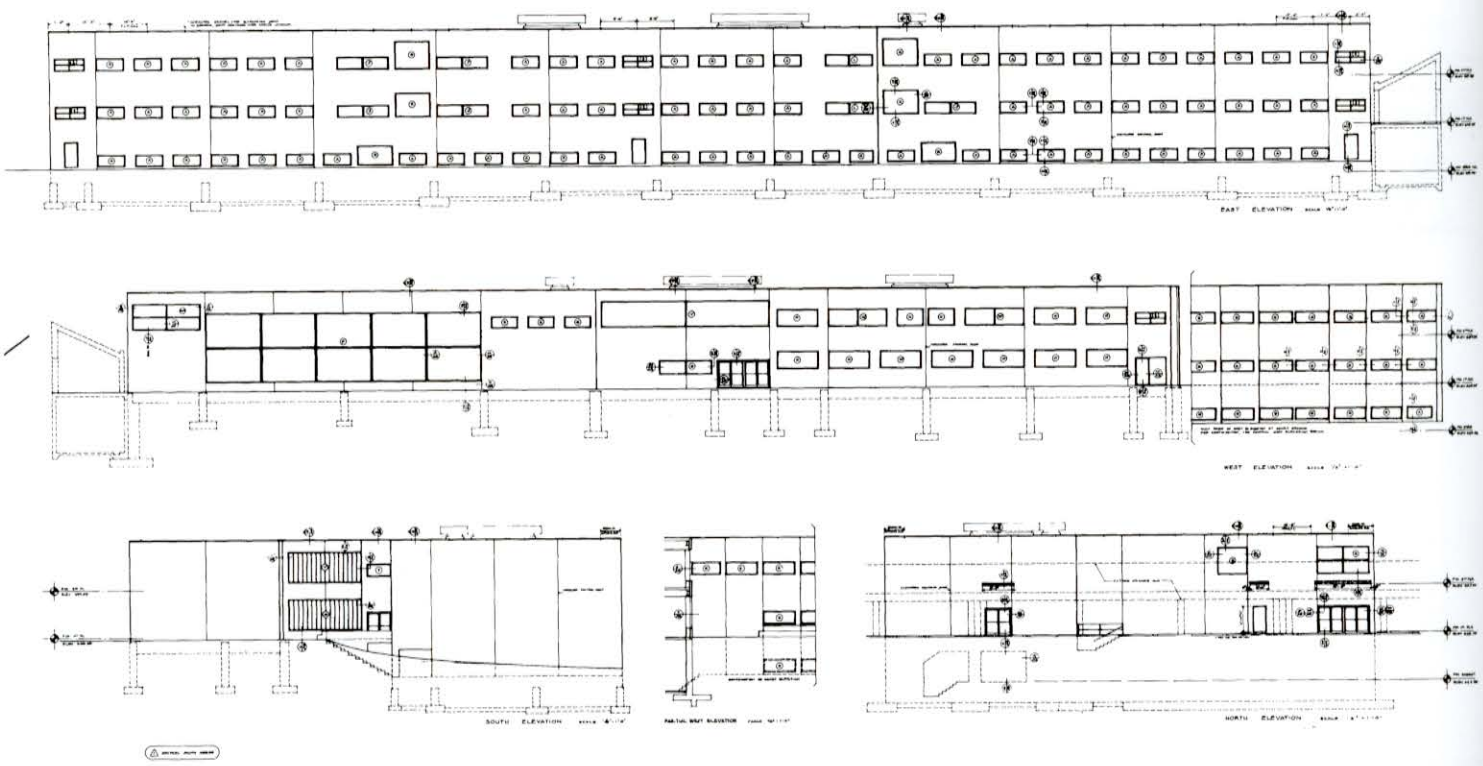
The programs developed by the State University Construction Fund are sophisticated and complete, and we enjoyed following them to the letter. The Humanities classroom building called essentially for a series of cells – small, medium, and large – some needing outside light and some not. The small cells (the faculty-teaching and departmental offices) and the medium ones (the classrooms and seminar rooms) generally need light and are placed along outside walls. The big lecture rooms are located in the interior of the building. We excluded interior courts because they increase the perimeter of the building and are expensive.

The distribution of uses suggested two scales of circulation: noisy and mass on one hand and quiet and individual on the other – or, to put it another way, a broad and busy avenue between classrooms and lecture rooms and a narrow, quiet street along the other side of the building for the offices. There is a



109. Humanities Building, ground floor plan

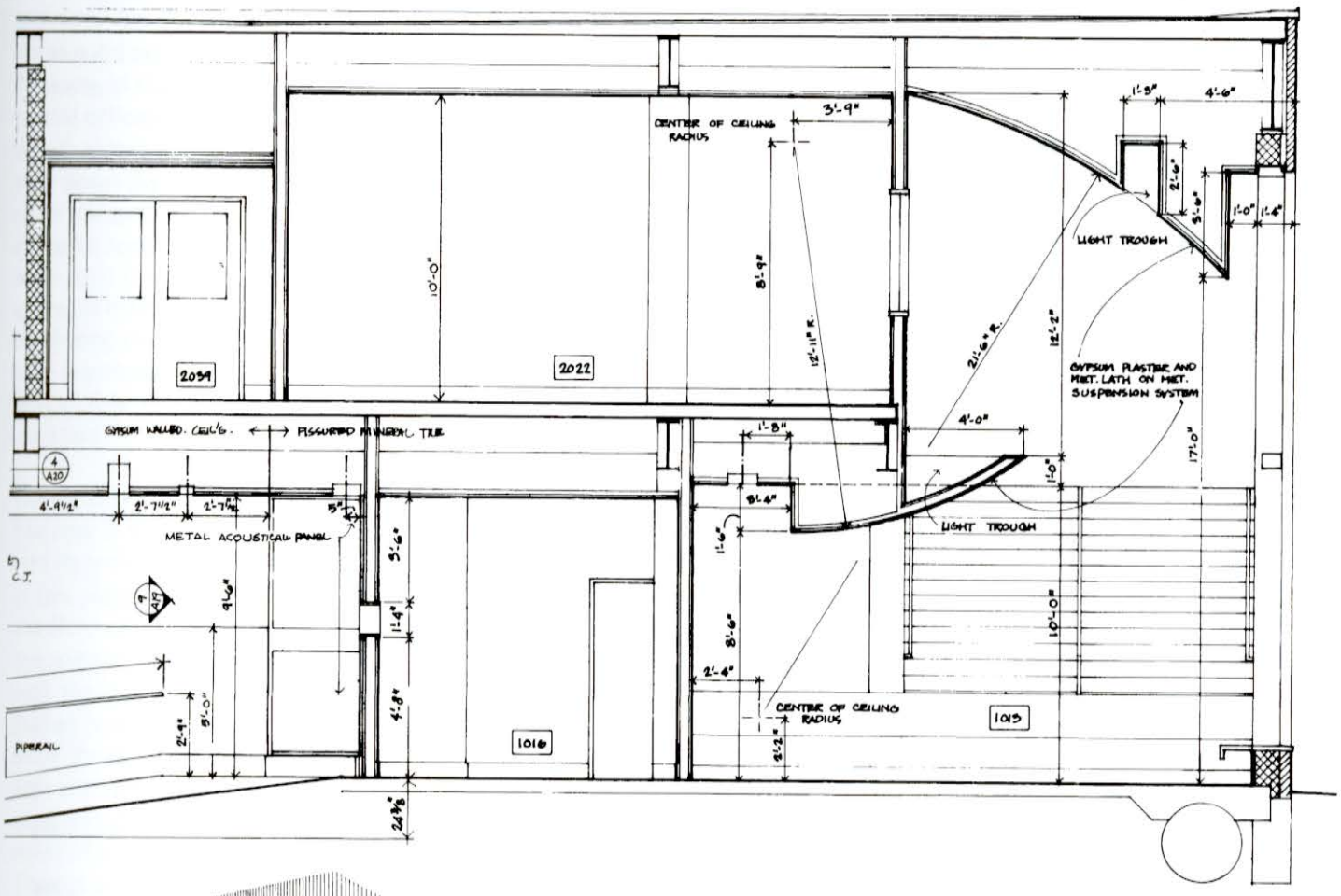
110. Humanities Building, elevations

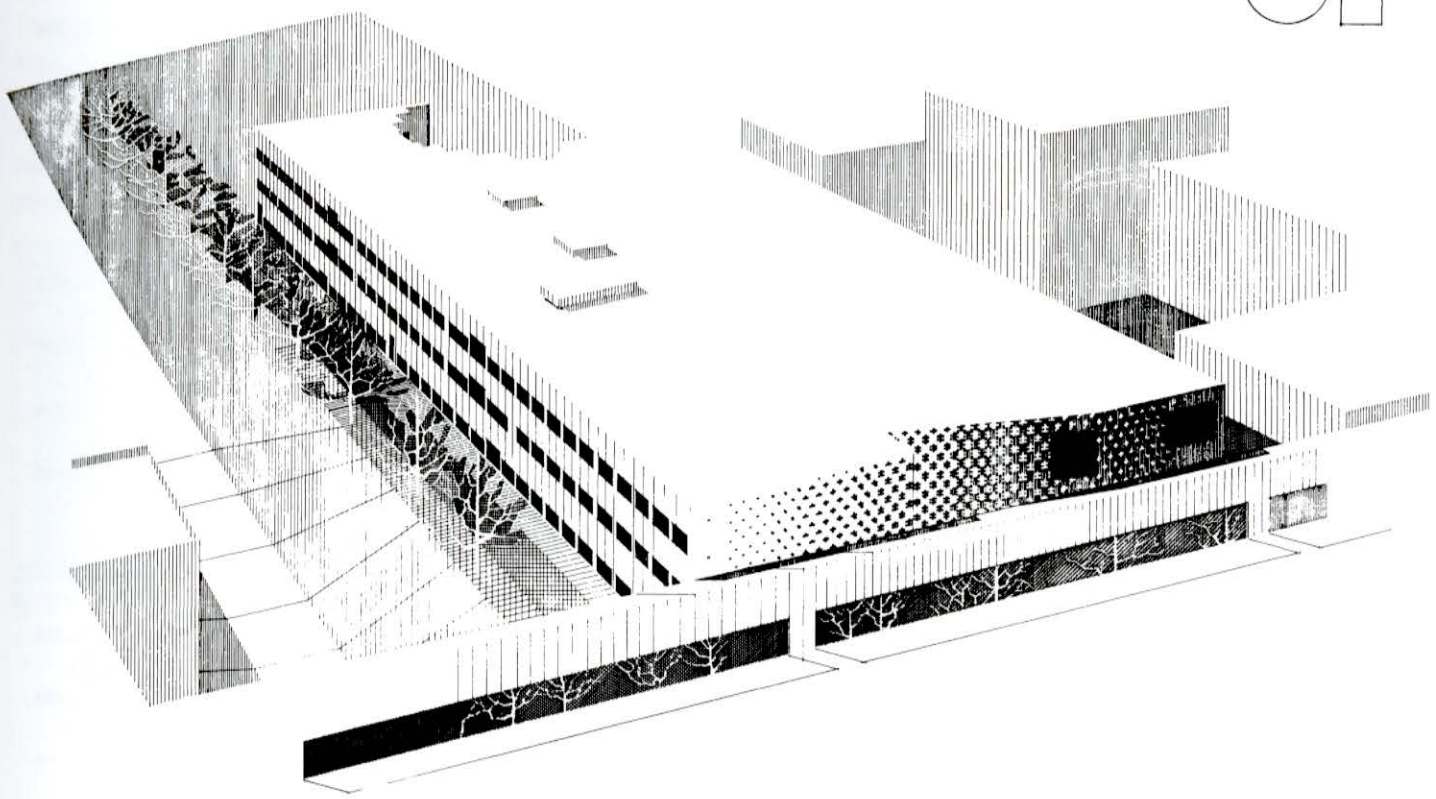


high circulation gallery outside the big lecture hall; this is the only rhetorical space inside the building.

There is little call for student gathering places in the program, owing, perhaps, to limitations of the budget. We tend ourselves to minimize explicit architectural meeting places because students seem not to like or use them. They want to make or discover their own opportunities for friendly gathering in places not designated as such. On the other hand, opportunities for continuing a discussion after leaving a seminar or for holding hands between classes are requirements of a classroom building as valid as good site lines in the lecture halls. We do have at the end of a corridor one little crow's nest to hide in, marked "student lounge," but the broad corridor, the gallery, and the landing of the main stair contain implicit rather than explicit opportunities to lounge: circulation eddies, quasi-niches, ledges capable of being sat on, etc. Outside the back end of the building, near the vending machines, is a quasi-amphitheater where students can sit in the sun.

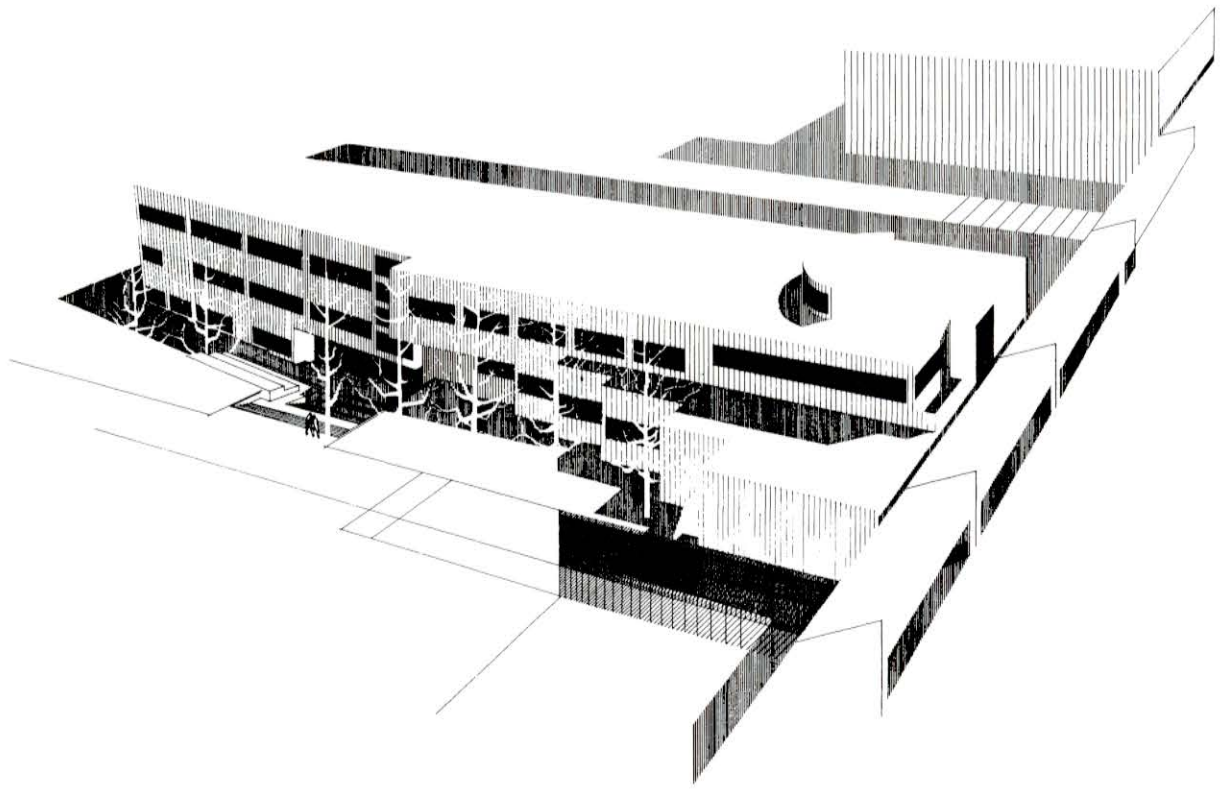
To meet the budget the interior finishes are of today's usual mean materials: resilient tile floors, gypsum wallboard, epoxy resin wainscoting, and acoustic tile ceilings. But our color schemes are not white or light values with spots of primary hues, in the Modern vein, but rather, frankly Edwardian institutional or like the interiors of classic Pullman cars. Warm gray hues with medium dark values do not have to be gloomy if they are skillfully chosen and combined and picked out with occasional decorative stripes; they wear well because they disguise the dirt and disguise, somewhat, the thinness and inherent shoddiness of modern materials.





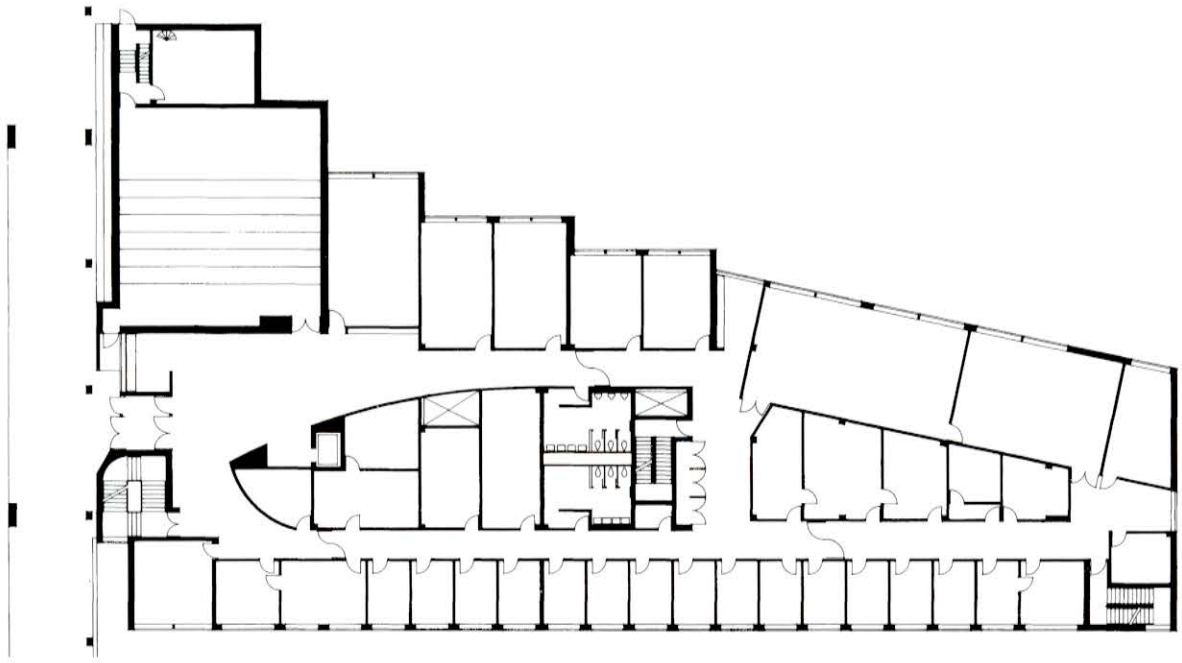
111. Humanities Building, section through lobby

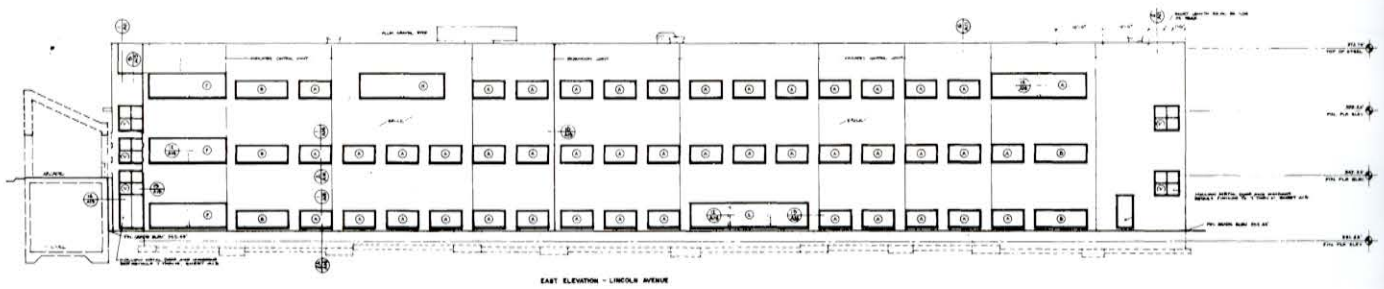
112. Humanities Building



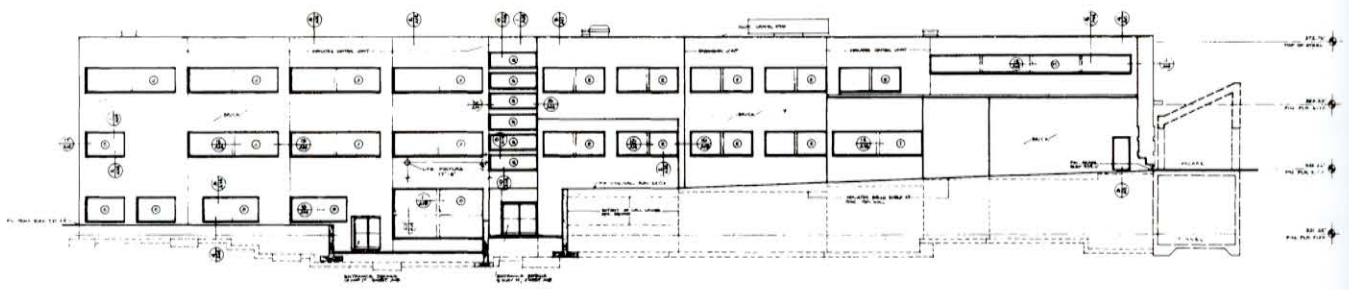
113. Social Sciences Building, perspective

114. Social Sciences Building, plan and elevations

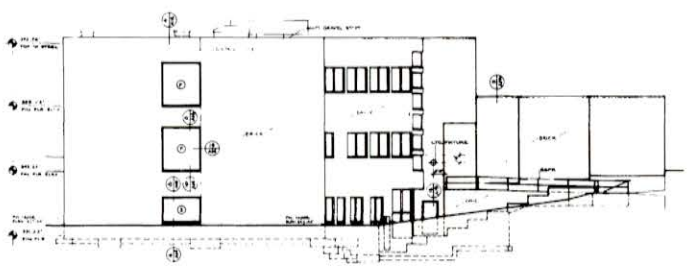




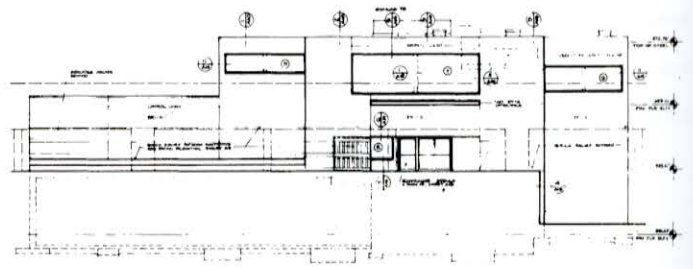
EAST ELEVATION – LINCOLN AVENUE



WEST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION – SERVICE TUNNEL

Likewise, we have reacted against Modern institutional furnishings that are sophisticated and "original," and related and unified among themselves and with the architecture. In the State University catalogs the furnishings tend to be second-rate copies of Knoll executive furniture; they do not succeed on their own high-style terms and are symbolically wrong for the cluttered environs of individualistic academics and the anti-Establishment life-styles of today's students, especially those in the arts. Therefore, we chose desks, chairs, and files from the backs of the catalogs, designs that were typical a generation ago, classic examples, not Modern, that evolved practically over time and achieved a symbolism of the ordinary. On the other hand, we chose good period reproductions for some of the lounges and special offices, to include explicit beauty where appropriate and to tone down the unity. We bore in mind the campy furnishings of students' lodgings today culled from local thrift shops. Our trouble was with members of the University purchasing department, who said we were recommending the very things that architects had convinced them were bad.

The outside is a decorated shed. The roof is flat, and the building fits into its entire allotted site except in two places. A diagonal niche in the front allows an escape exit from the auditorium and reflects its side wall; the beginning of an unusually shaped court, surrounding the open amphitheater at the back, admits light and reflects the building's open-ended, unfinished quality, the result of a need for future expansion. There is surface decoration on the front, a pattern of mauve and black brick, concentrated, explicit, and in contrast with the boringness of the whole. From a distance it appears as a soft gradation of hues, resembling the dotted fragments in a Roy Lictenstein comic strip. From close up and along the arcade, you read a changing rhythmic pattern that keeps you interested. Otherwise the facade would be a bore, in the bad sense, because, owing to the necessities of the interior, it contains no interesting architectural features. Inside, the only decoration is the modest Edwardian stripes on the walls and floors, mentioned earlier, an elaborate stair landing and seat combination, and the covered plaster ceiling of the entrance gallery containing 1930s-like indirect lighting at a larger scale.

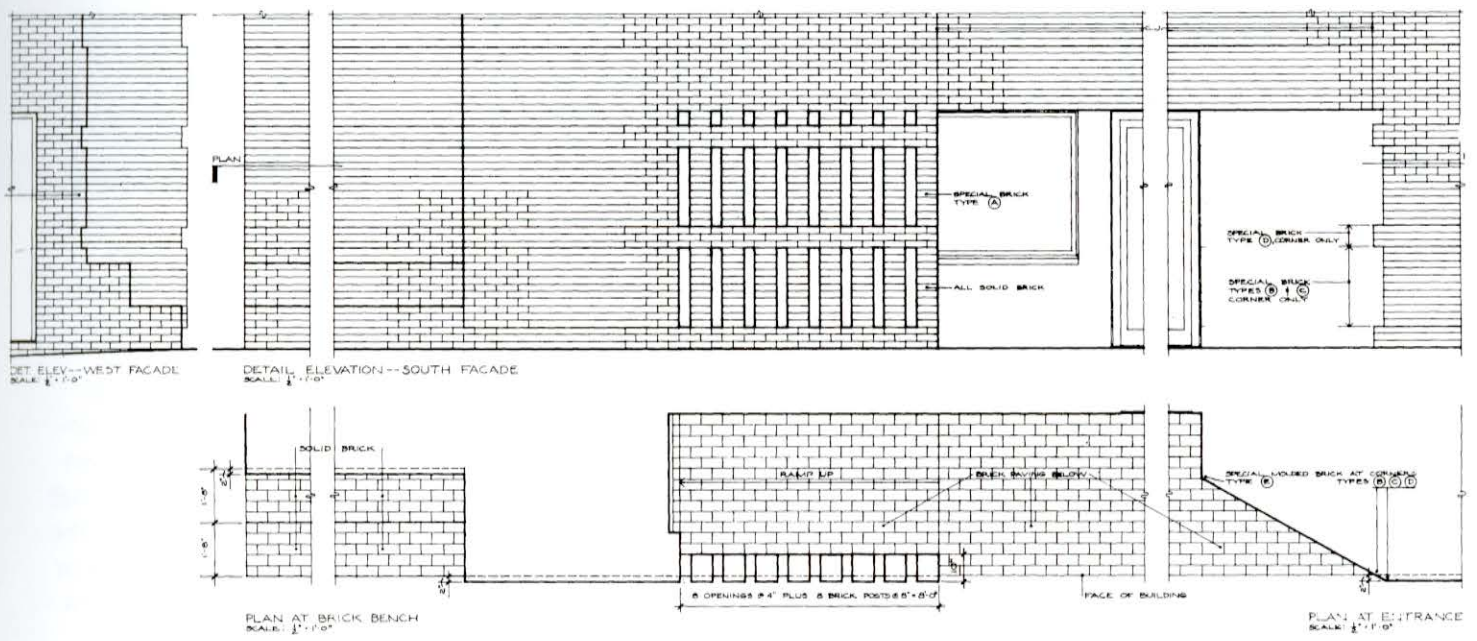
The two long facades are ordinary, achieving their effect through the scale and rhythm of their oversized, conventional windows: big and varied windows on the west side that you see close up, and big and regular on the east side that you see from a distance. The almost even rhythm of windows of the east facade makes for an overall pattern and enlarges the scale — appropriately because this facade serves as an edge to the whole complex, like a city wall. We managed to make the building two and one-half stories on this side by the use of split levels. This defines further the edge of the complex as does the overall simplicity of the massing.

We think this ordinary building, in the context of all the extraordinary buildings, will look extraordinary.

The program for the Social Sciences classroom building, like that of the Humanities Building, called for a series of small, medium, and large cells. However, the Social Sciences Building is smaller. It contains only one lecture hall and therefore proportionally more rooms requiring daylight, and it has a few large laboratory classrooms served by small, dependent rooms. Its site is on the arcade, at the front edge of the complex, opposite the Humanities Building. Because it must balance that building along the east side and act as a container for the complex, its two-and-one-half-story facade, housing office uses similar to those of the Humanities Building, can also repeat that facade with minor variations in its window types and rhythms. It is smaller than the Humanities Building, yet its facade on the arcade must extend the full 130 feet; therefore, it takes on a piano shape in plan to allow its east facade to approach that of the Humanities Building in length. The west facade in contrast takes on a jagged and expedient form resulting from the needs of the program rather than from the needs of the site plan. A quasi-amphitheater, coinciding with a stairway to a side entrance, takes up residual outside space on this side and acts (like that of the Humanities Building) as a not-too-explicit sitting space off the student lounge.

The decoration on this ordinary shed — ordinary at least from the east and the south — consists of a big Art Deco stripe in brick relief with a purpose similar to the decoration on the Humanities Building — to give some interest to the plain architecture of the facade along the arcade. Three big steps included here can be sat on if desired.

The inside is a modification of the Humanities Building in its circulation system (big and noisy, and small and quiet), finishes, and furnishing. The budget will allow for no grand staircase. To give some big scale inside this relatively little building, we have included at the entrance in the plan of the corridor wall a fragment of a curve with a huge radius: a touch of artiness.


PLAN
SPECIAL BRICK TYPE (A)
ALL SOLID BRICK
SPECIAL BRICK TYPE (D) CORNER ONLY
SPECIAL BRICK TYPES (B) & (C) CORNER ONLY
DET. ELEV.--WEST FACADE
DETAIL ELEVATION--SOUTH FACADE
SOLID BRICK
RAMP UP
BRICK PAVING BELOW
SPECIAL MOLDED BRICK AT CORNERS TYPE (E) TYPES (B) (C) (D)
8 OPENINGS @ 4' PLUS 8 BRICK POSTS @ 8'-0"
FACE OF BUILDING
PLAN AT BRICK BENCH
PLAN AT ENTRANCE

115. Social Sciences Building, entrance detail

Yale Mathematics Building Competition, 1970
(with the assistance of W. G. Clark, Steven Izenour, and Denise Scott Brown)

This is a decorated shed in the tradition of historical ordinary architecture: symbolically ordinary in the way the eighteenth-century Connecticut Hall at Yale was ordinary in its construction, program, and appearance; ordinary in the sense that it is conventional and it looks conventional.

Ordinary architecture with some decoration on it is a good model for university architecture. University buildings combine low budgets and high aspirations. Although they must provide down-to-earth, generous, kickable accommodations for some of society's toughest users, they must also express the values society places on education. Campus architecture of the turn of the century — not only the Sever Halls or Cope and Stewardson's Washington University and Princeton complexes but the early college halls of many American state universities — accomplished this combination of tough generosity and rhetoric, are loved for this quality, and have become the image of the American college. Yale's Gothic buildings, although later, share this quality, and not only because of their Gothic styling.

Modern architecture also tried to express aspiration through poetic simplicity and adherence to the directives of function and structure. Yet, the Modern architecture of Yale, the architecture of the 1950s and 1960s, did not stress the simple virtues but sought instead "original" forms derived from "advanced" technology resulting in heroic monuments. Symbolism was cast out in favor of expressionism: expression of function, structure, and mechanical equipment by complex articulation of elements of the building (Art and Architecture Building); or expression of the "imperatives" of industrialized construction (Beinecke Library); or expression of heroic aspirations by reference to a heroic architectural "form giver" of the Modern movement (Becton Center). But, somehow, instead of revolutionary architectural aspirations or scholarly academic aspirations, these buildings seem to express most clearly the munificence of their corporate donors. Perhaps this showplace architecture, and the new value system behind the student protests, caused the writers of the Mathematics Building program to call for "workable, economical, generally nonmonumental space" and "the integration of new buildings into the strong existing fabric."

Ordinary architecture with superficial, openly acknowledged symbolic and associative ornament harking back to the traditional campus seems particularly suited to the changing values of the campus. The students and faculty will admit of a little rhetoric if it is skin-deep and witty (a kindly parody of academic and corporate rhetoric), while their aspirations will, we hope, be suited by the tough-abundant quality of the rest of the building, which gracefully allows them to make it their own. Architecture for a time of questioning cannot be monumental. It cannot be a barracks either. But it must be more than a loft. To the extent that it is successfully more, in the spirit of the protest, it will help express the lofty aspirations of that protest.

In designing the Yale Mathematics Building we thought of institutional building of the recent past on the one hand and of Gothic decoration on the other hand. Explicit association with existing models was part of the design method. We hope the building will call to mind these earlier examples.

The image is ordinary: a working building enhancing, rather than upstaging, the buildings around it. The rhetoric lies in Leet Oliver Hall, which has enough for both, and in the relationship between the two. The Gothic porch (in concrete) and the quatrefoil paving in back are small stylistic appliqués on the loftlike bulk, making the relation to Leet Oliver explicit through symbolism as well as through compositional form and scale.

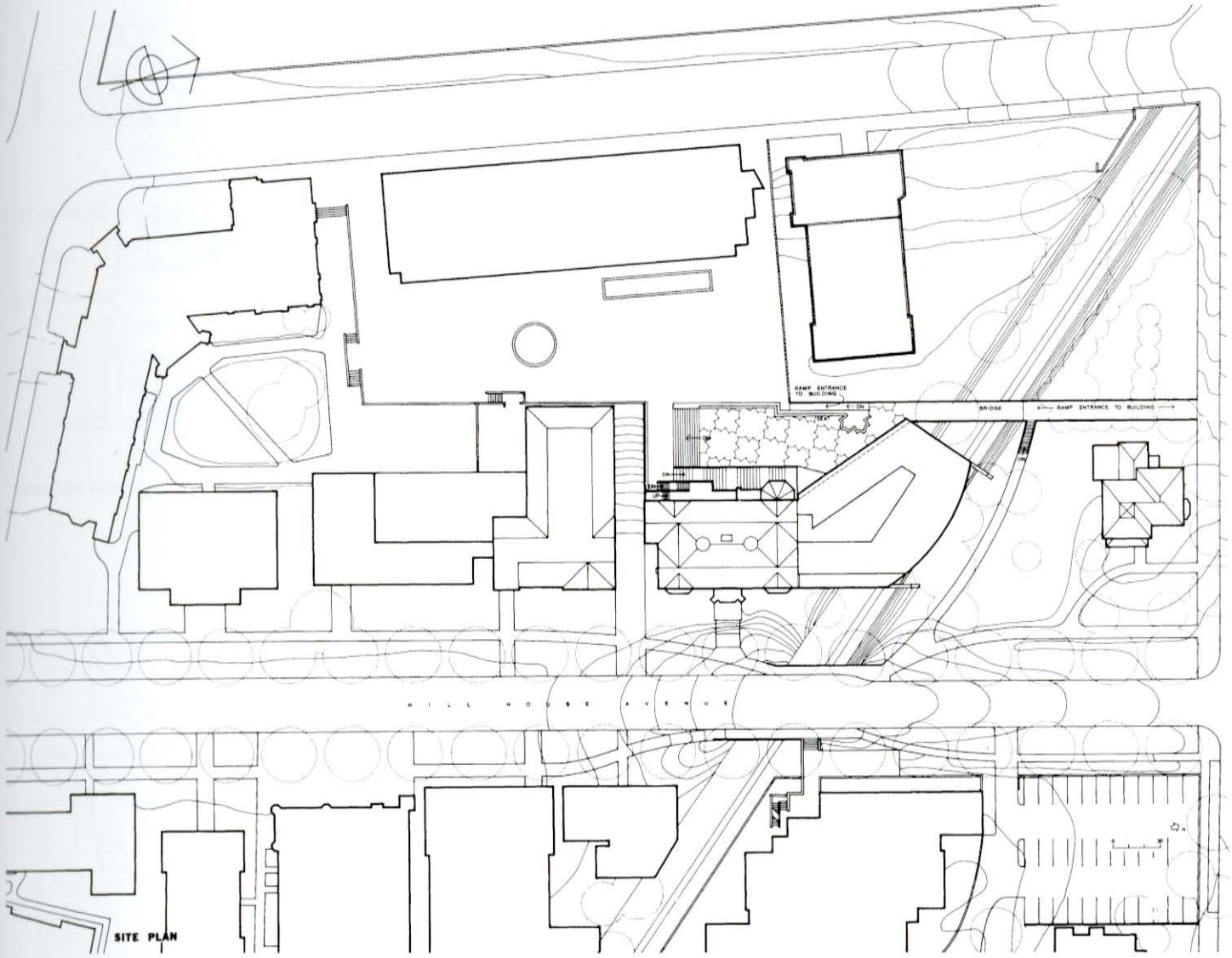
The substance is ordinary: conventional windows and brick curtain walls on steel frame for economical construction and maintenance. More rhetoric, but of a "second-glance" order, will come, we hope, from the generosity and careful proportions and detailing of the conventional elements.

On the outside the new building is an addition, rather than a monument, but a big addition to be accommodated to the delicate architecture of Hillhouse Avenue. We have tried to maintain a big scale yet diminish the necessarily big bulk by shortening the facade on the street, setting back at the upper floor, changing the color value at the fourth floor, and — important in its relation to Leet Oliver — by inflecting the shape of the plan. The big new building, because it is dependent on Leet Oliver, does not dominate Leet Oliver. It could not stand alone or without Leet Oliver.

The admittedly big bulk of our addition that persists even after these architectural adjustments does not worry us very much. We could not do much about the size of the building or the restricted site, and neighborhoods increasing in density and scale go through awkward phases. The Piazza San Marco probably looked awkward at certain times in its growth. On the other hand, the new building reinforces the space of the street by maintaining the building height and line of the street and the scale of the new buildings across the street and to the south. Yet through its bowed side elevation it terminates the row of big buildings, and, inflecting toward the Dana House and the march of distinguished houses up Hillhouse Avenue, it connects with the residential character of the street toward the north. By its diagonal shape in back, it suggests enclosure, terminating Becton Plaza, but without an added wing, thereby maintaining its generous scale.

Harmony with Leet Oliver is sought through contrast as well as analogy. The windows are different in type yet similar in scale; the material is different in type and texture (glazed brick) yet similar in color to that of Leet Oliver (gray limestone). At the back, the paving pattern of the plaza and the tracery of the entrance are different in scale and material from the ornament of Leet Oliver yet similar symbolically.

There was a suggested desire line of pedestrian movement diagonally across the site from Becton Plaza through the new building to Hillhouse Avenue. We decided very early not to exaggerate the importance of pedestrian circulation on this site or to make an architectural feature of it — that is, not to make an archway through the building or a big megastructural ramp diagonally penetrating it. Exaggerated urbanism attached to a small building in the manner of Le Corbusier's Carpenter Center or Millowner's House, involving near-vehicular scale for mass circulation of pedestrians, is magnificent for the heroic fifties but out of order for the ordinary seventies. We do not expect surging hordes on the block. Elsewhere on the block, pedestrians walk around buildings because people, unlike cars, can conveniently make sharp turns. Even the diagonally placed Sheffield Hall tower at the opposite corner of the block is not penetrated by exterior circulation, although it appears to



SITE PLAN

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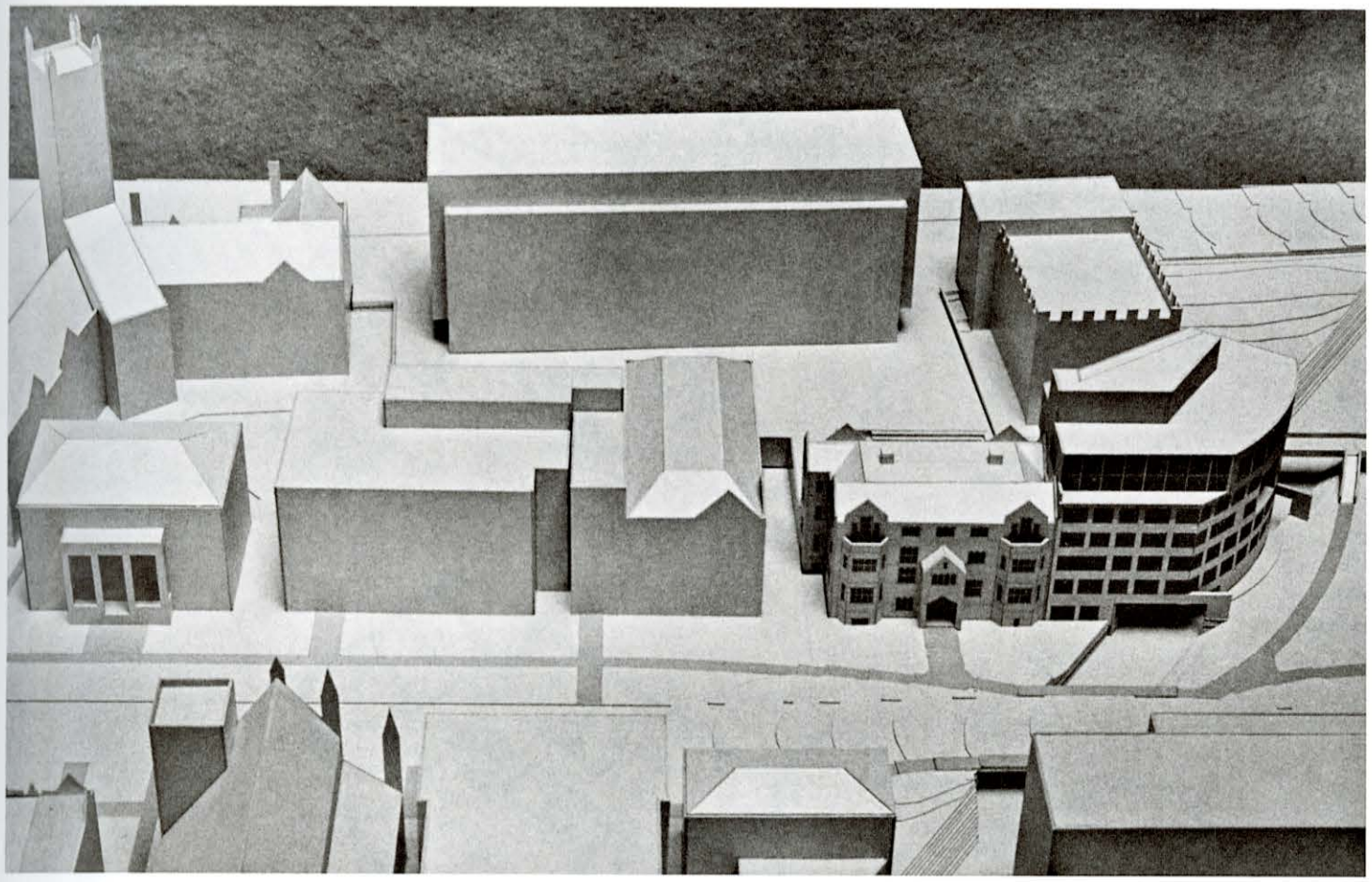
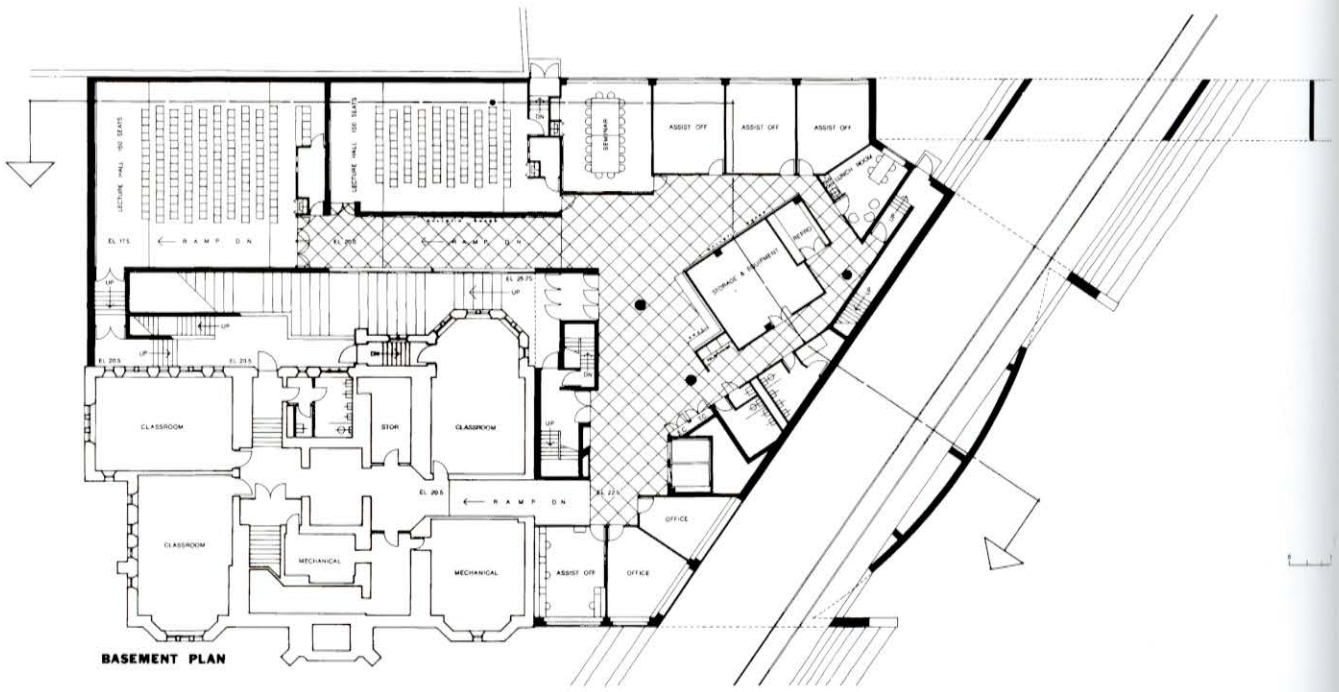


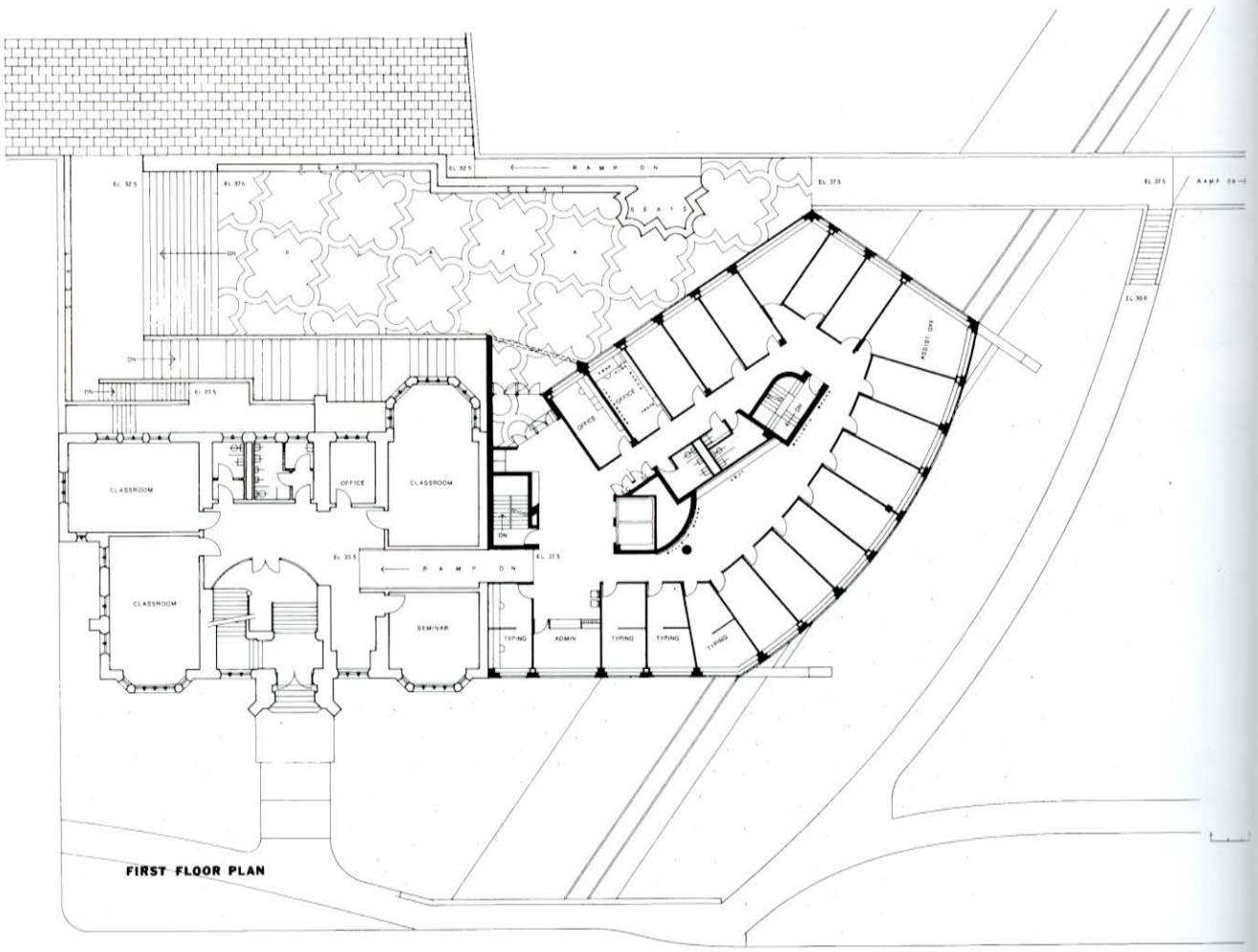
be. Buildings that are "gateways" are expensive because their volume is increased and their circulation on the ground floor is impeded. For these reasons the interior demands of the Mathematics Building dominate the exterior space. You have to walk around it, and its shape does not inflect to oversatisfy the needs of exterior circulation. The building forms dominate the circulation pattern even at the expense of depriving Becton Plaza of a 1960s-style diagonal debouchment.

Inside, heavy circulation is limited to the basement and part of the first floor. Ramped access for the handicapped is available from Trumbull Street and Becton Plaza. Because the building is an addition to Leet Oliver, the entrance from Hillhouse Avenue remains in Leet Oliver; because the two buildings are functionally integral, the generous spaces of the old building can suffice for the new; new public space is minimized in favor of amenable private spaces. However, portions of the new corridors are wider than is needed for circulation and are planned, as at Purchase, as gallery space for incidental meeting and communication, where seats and bulletin boards abound. The same idea carries into outdoor accessways to the large lecture halls and the rear plaza, which is planned to encourage informal meetings and groupings. The common rooms are central and face the view up Hillhouse Avenue. The reading space of the library also has this good view.

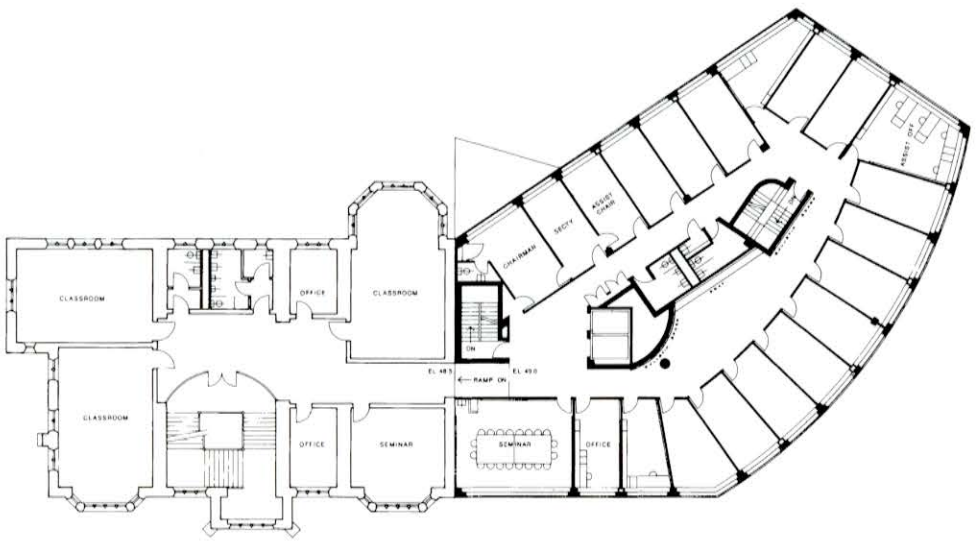
Interior furnishings, particularly of common spaces, library, and lecture rooms, will, we hope, avoid cut-rate, Knoll-executive imitations in favor of something tougher, more banal and "funky," and also more expansive and comfortable. The image of the club lounge translated into vinyl with "soft" armchairs and alcoves — spaces and furniture to lounge in — seems attractive to today's students and faculty.



BASEMENT PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

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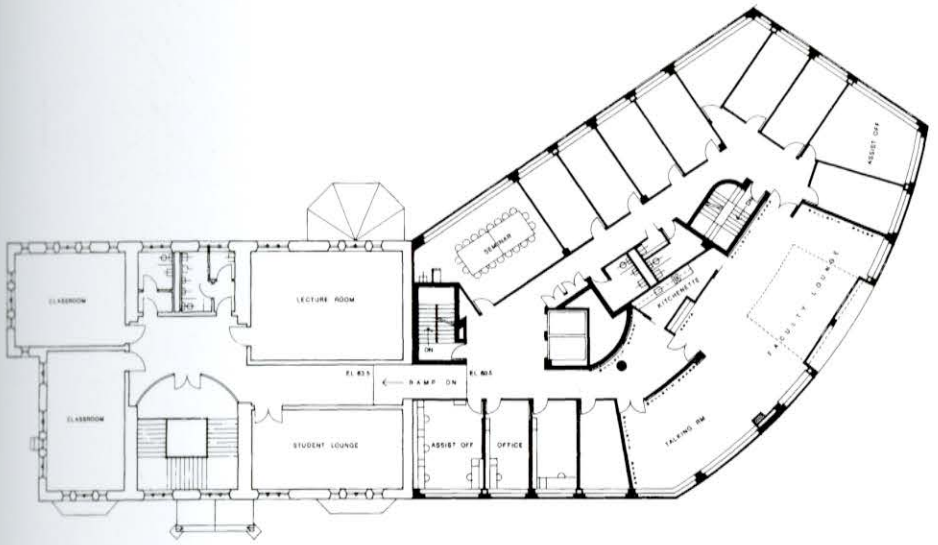
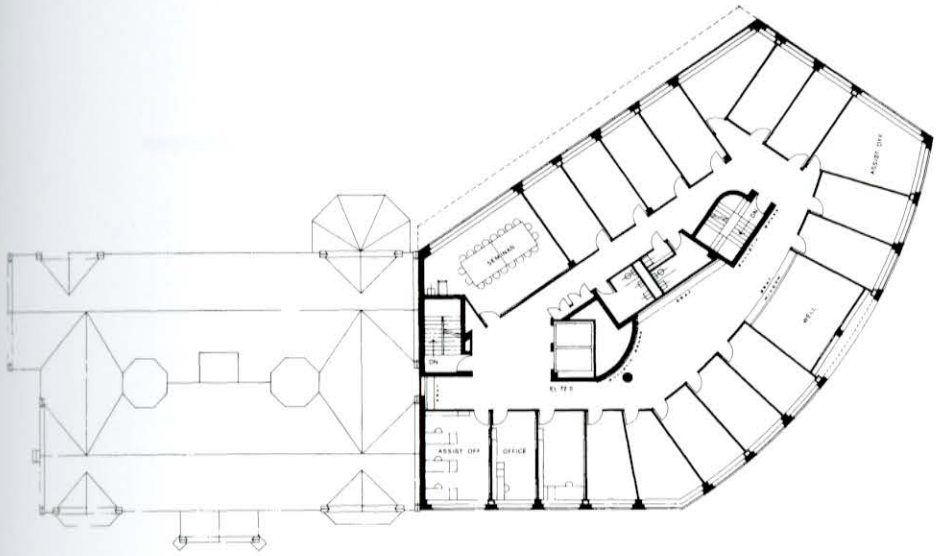
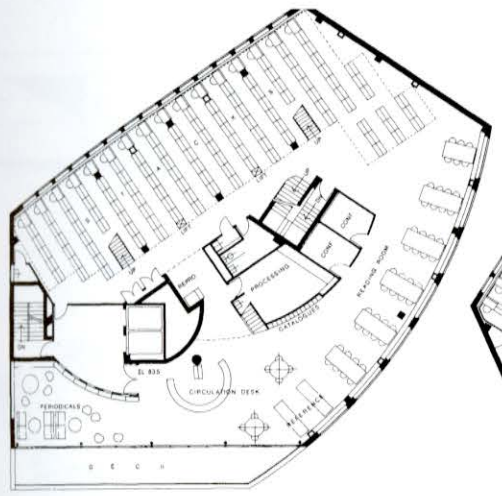


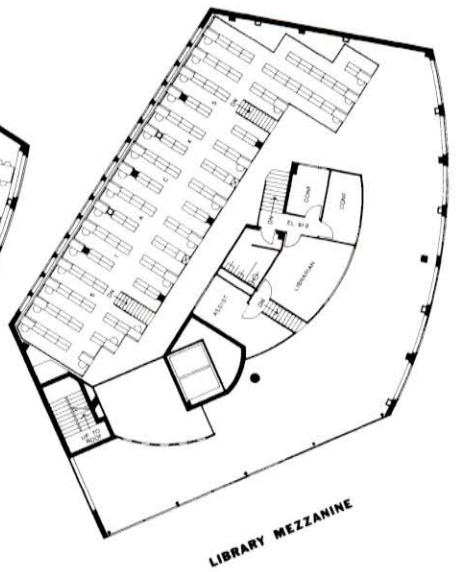
THIRD FLOOR PLAN



FOURTH FLOOR PLAN



FIFTH FLOOR LIBRARY PLAN



LIBRARY MEZZANINE

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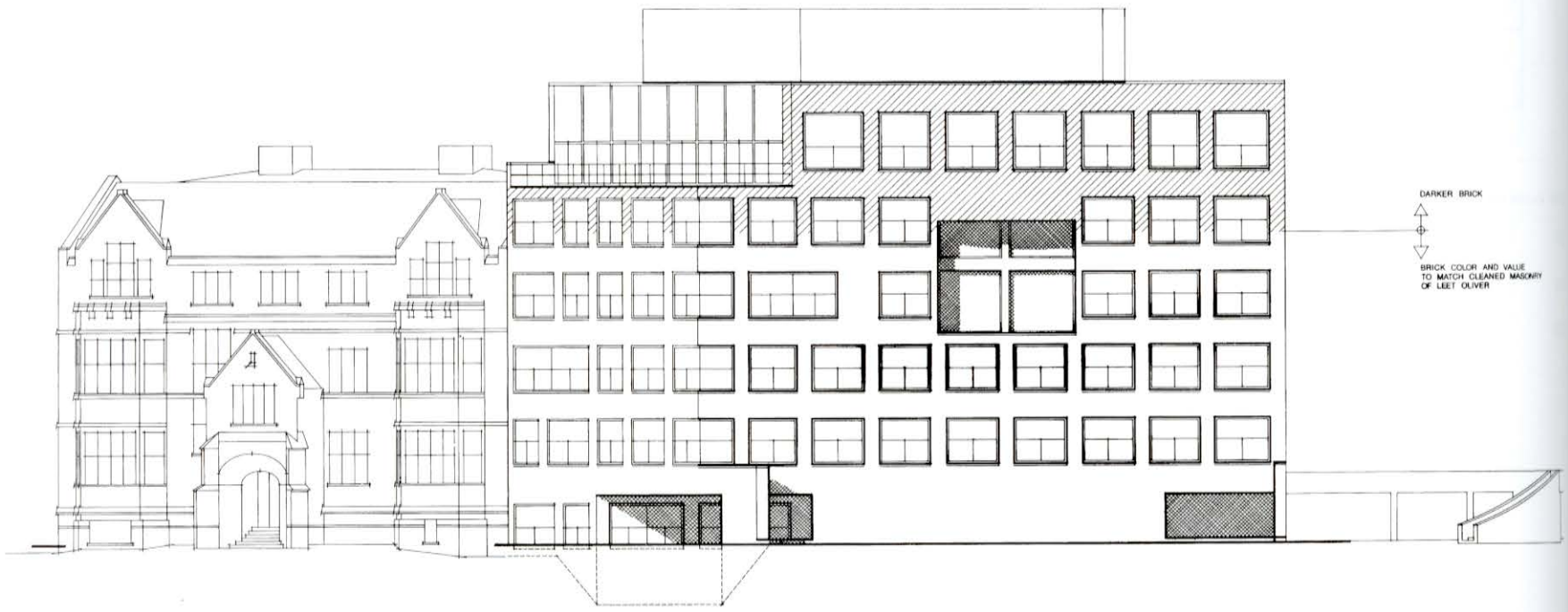
We have rejected technology as a channel for architectural expressionism but not the valid technical issues that arise in this particular project from the need to span a railroad. The supporting structure spanning the railroad cut is treated as a special incident requiring special construction — a touch of frame piercing an otherwise consistent skin-clad building and mediating between the regular geometry of the steel-framed building above and the protruding piers below. Architecturally, these spans are not too carefully related to the rest of the building and certainly not treated as a predominating "feature" but rather as one of the incidents of a complex building.

The rail line presents the twin problems of airborne and structureborne noise. Measurements of structureborne noise will be made in the new Health Center across the street. The design requirements developed from those tests will be met by conventional lead-asbestos isolation details or by alternate methods now being tested in subways in New York. Airborne noise will be controlled by adjusting the mass and separation of the exterior envelope. Openings will be protected, where required, by hermetically sealed, double-glazed units, including panes of differential thickness, set in split-angle frames. Tests for airborne noise will be conducted at the site. We expect they will indicate that only limited areas of the building envelope require this special acoustical treatment.

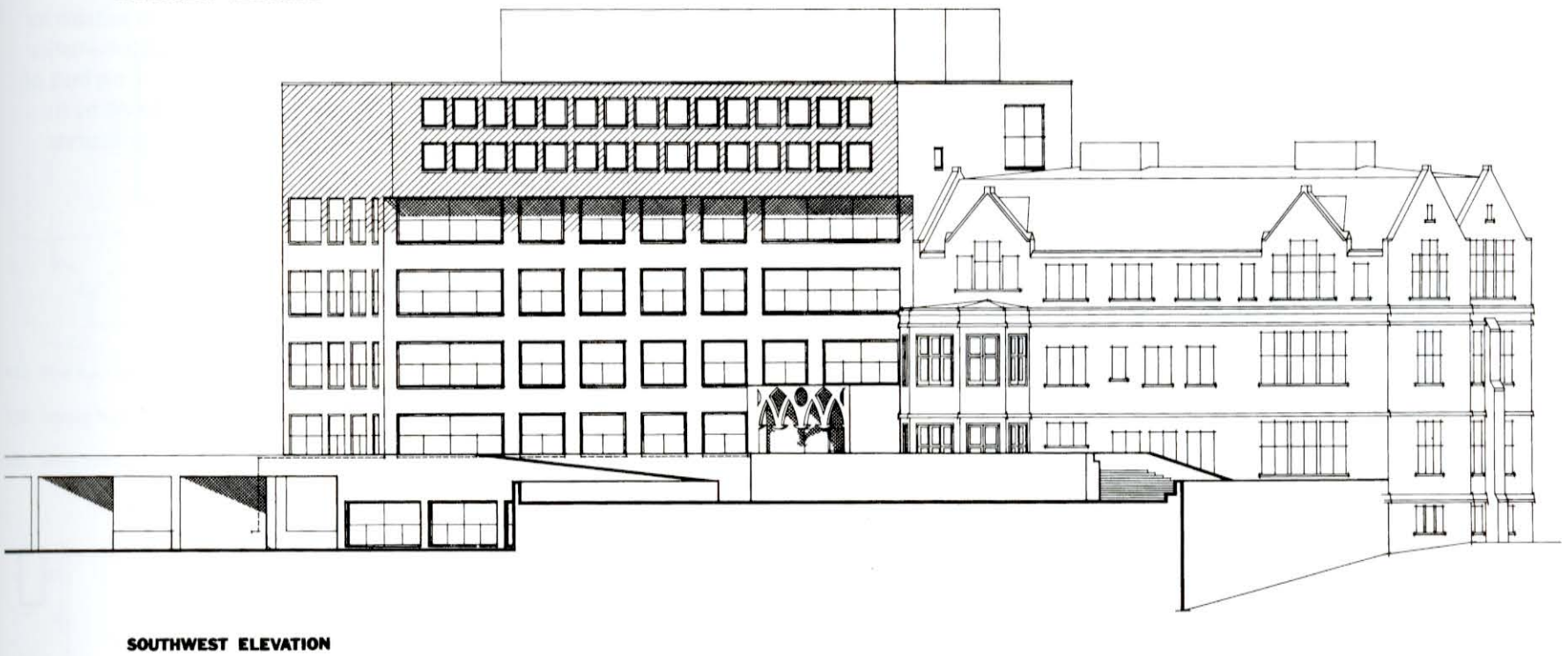
SECTION

EAST ELEVATION



NORTHEAST ELEVATION

NORTHWEST ELEVATION



SOUTHWEST ELEVATION

Addition to the Carol M. Newman Library, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia, 1970
(Vosbeck Vosbeck Kendrick Redinger in association with Venturi and Rauch, with the assistance of Gerod Clark and Denise Scott Brown)

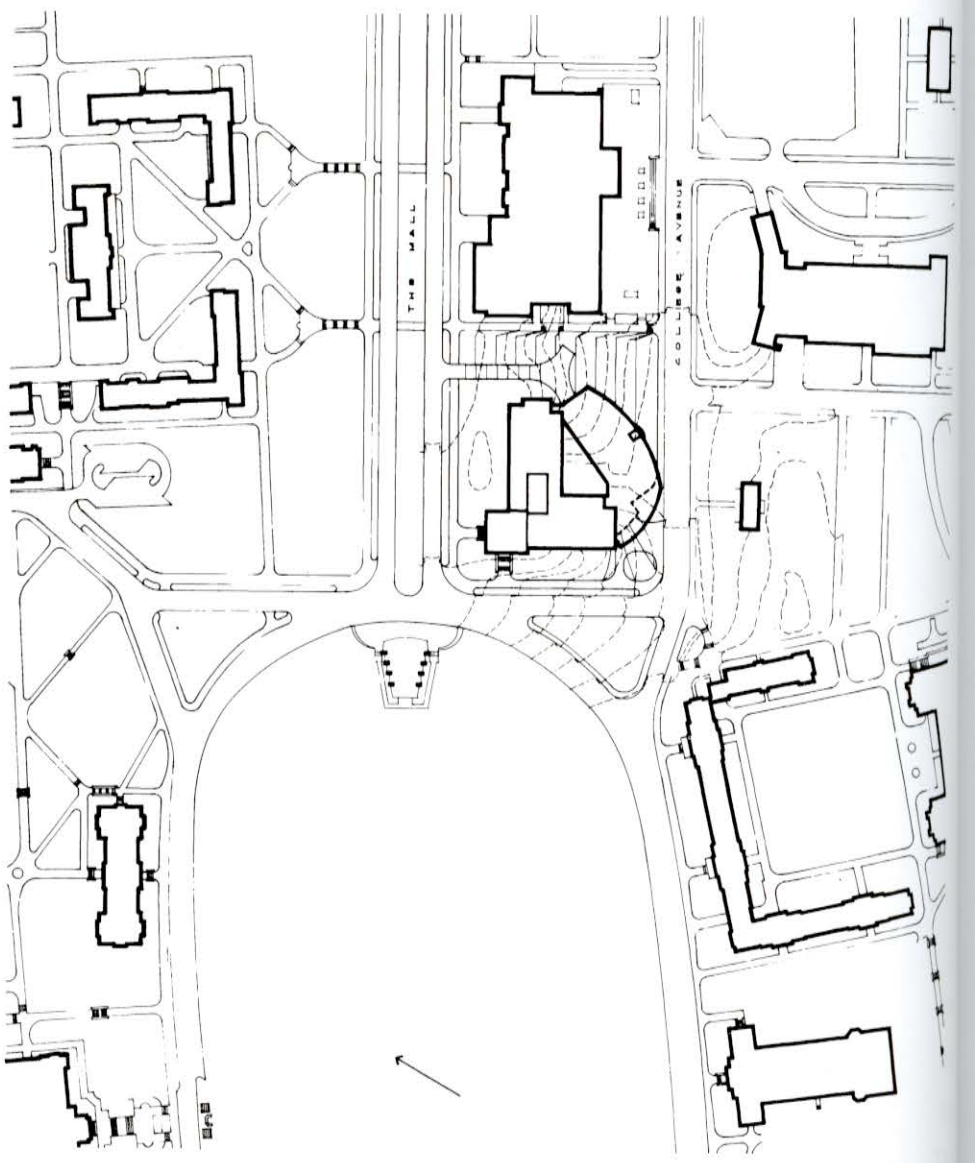
The program for the new general library for V.P.I. required approximately doubling the existing capacity of volumes by renovating the existing building and adding to it. The site of the existing building, west of the Drill Field, limited the opportunities for expansion toward the south only. And that direction was restricted 70 feet away by College Avenue, the most used entrance to the Drill Field from the commercial center of the town. This street, soon to become a pedestrian mall, works a skillful transition from small-town commercial to rural Collegiate Gothic in its tangential approach to the magnificent elliptical field. The original site plan for the campus had shown the major extension of the library across this street with an "H&O" bridge spanning the street. The more familiar we became with the site, the less we liked the idea of blocking the oblique and inviting view of the Drill Field from this approach. We were relieved to find that the total extension could fit compactly against the existing building on its own site. We tried to soften the necessary, slight encroachment onto College Avenue and to maintain the sense of expectation of the big field by curving the plan of the new wing to diminish its intrusion and to direct the space toward the field.

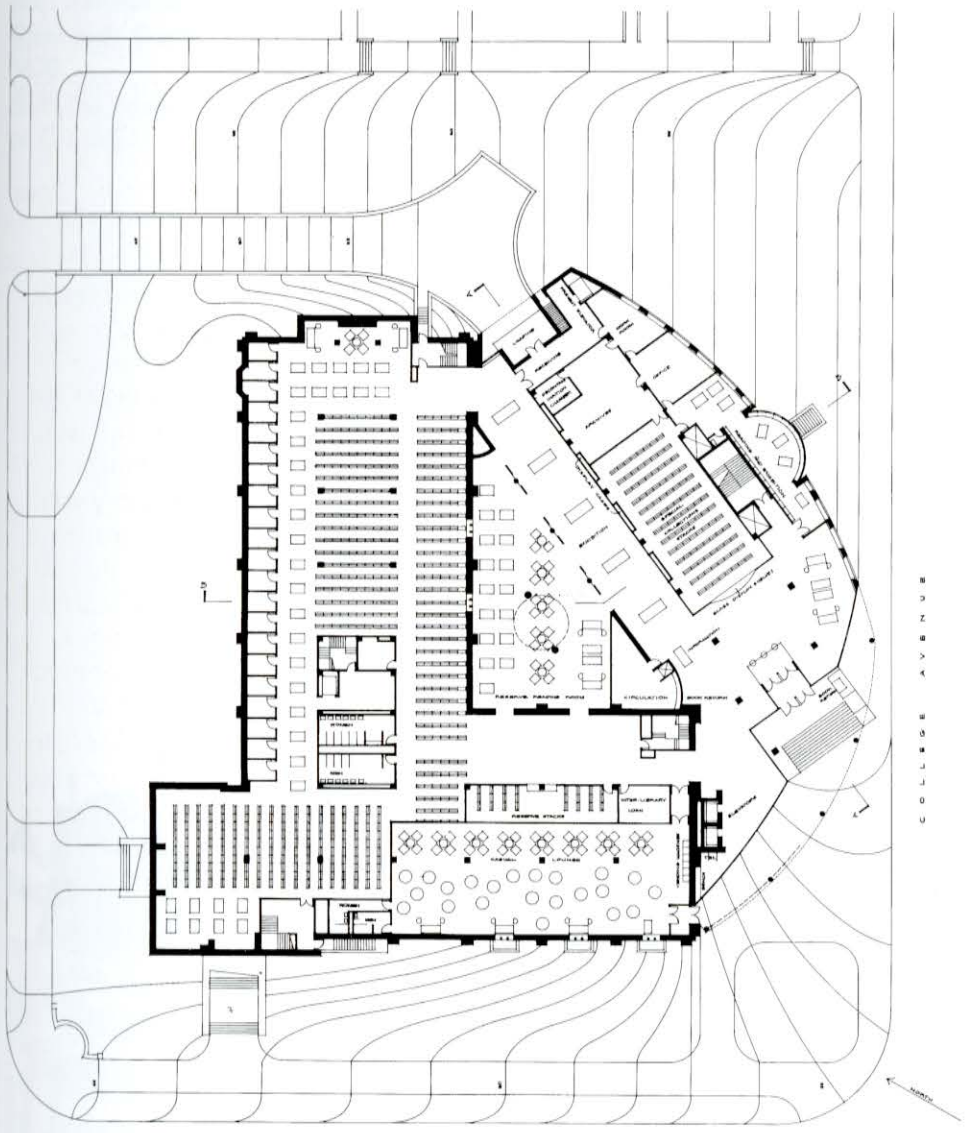
The interior program also encouraged a compact plan. Connecting the two ends of the L-shaped plan of the existing building with a new wing proved to be the simplest way of adding to it. It simplified the circulation of the building as a whole into a circular system that promoted easy control. It formed a triangular court that maintained a fair percentage of exterior wall and of daylight. We extended the spatial system of the existing building into the new wing. The old building is a flat-plate loft gallery, three square bays wide, dimensioned for standard stack lengths, with occasional service cores in the interior bays and big window on the outside walls. The flexibility built into this building allowed us to change some of the stack arrangements and room partitions and evolve an overall interior system (with appropriate exceptions) as follows: stacks with cores and circulation are in the middle of the gallery; standard carrels are integral with the shelving at the ends of cul-de-sac corridors and along the courtyard walls for light and view; and reading areas are broken by frequent study offices and seminar rooms along the other outside walls. The stacks are protected from light; all study areas receive daylight. In the curved wall is a big window with a cozy window seat. The flexible spatial system with a minimum of architectural articulation allows for exceptions in plan, especially on the upper two floors of the new wing, for administrative offices and processing. At the southwest point, perhaps the most busy circulation corner on the campus, are the new entrance, the control centers, reference areas, lounges, and main vertical circulation areas of each floor.

Off the entrance on the ground floor, in the dark basement of the old building, which is at this level, is the Loud Lounge. Although the reserve book section is accessible through a window, this lounge is separate from the circulation system of the library. You have to go outside to enter the library, and if you are outside, you do not have to commit yourself to the library to use this room for study or talk. The Loud Lounge will be open all night. All this is to lure reluctant undergraduates toward the library and to accommodate the current students' desires to study in inappropriate environments, according to old standards, where the music is loud, the furniture junky, and vending machines glow in the dim light.

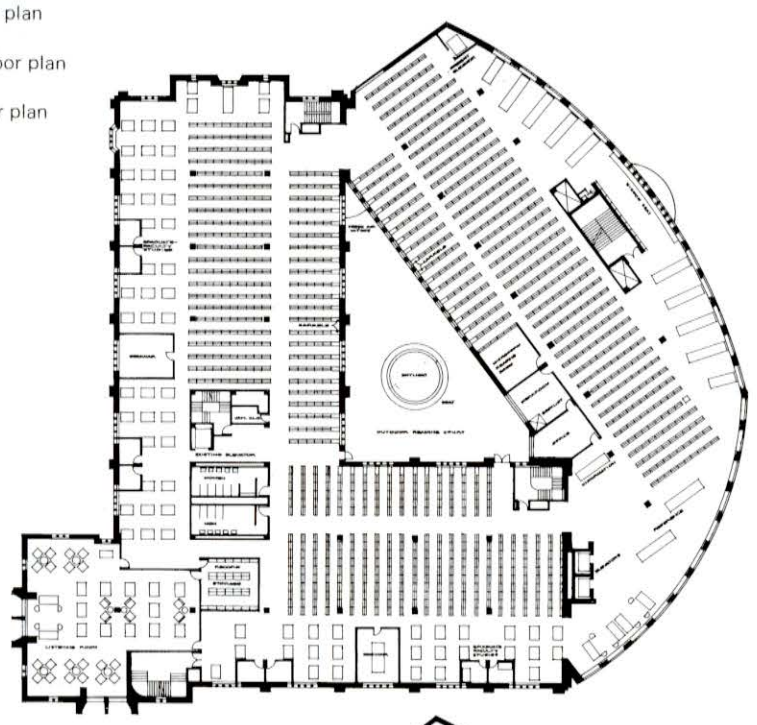
The existing building is Ordinary Collegiate Gothic on the outside, a loft clad in the standard, local, cold, gray stone, laid in random ashlar with buttresses for pilasters and big Elizabethan windows with limestone surrounds and mullions. Our addition achieves a harmony with the old building through matching its materials, including structural cast window frames similar to the limestone Gothic ones in form but bigger and relatively flatter. In contrast with the old building, the dominant rhythm in our plain masonry wall comes, not from the articulation of buttressed bays, but from the beat of the continuous strip windows in the Modern style that permits a flexible interior. The new entrance is a void under a cantilever approached by wide stairs suitable for sitting. Like the Yale Mathematics Building, the necessarily big bulk of the new wing is diminished by its recessive position and soft curves.

130. Site plan

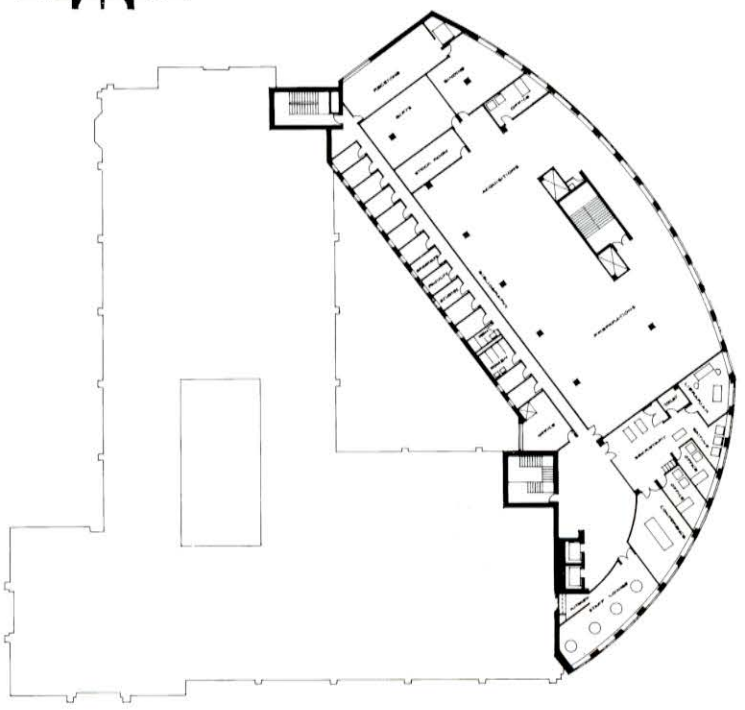




131. First floor plan



132. Second floor plan



133. Sixth floor plan

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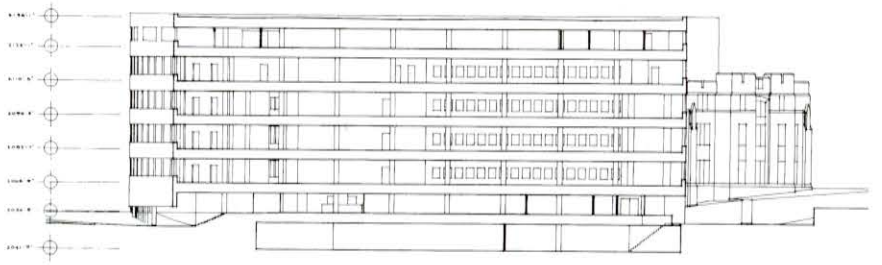

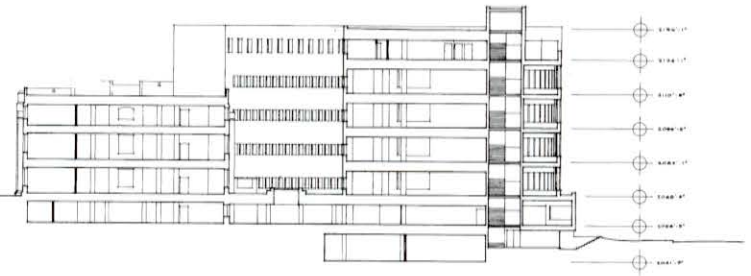

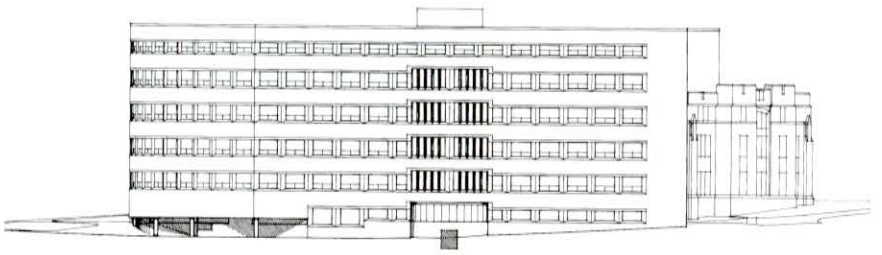

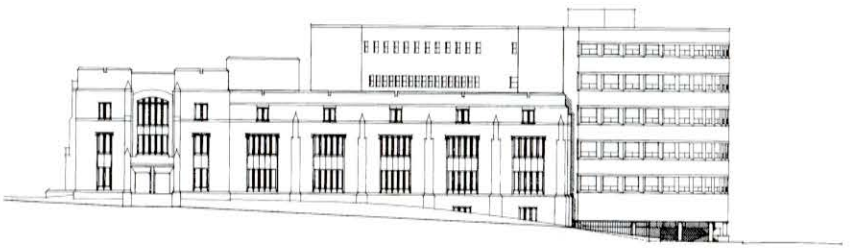

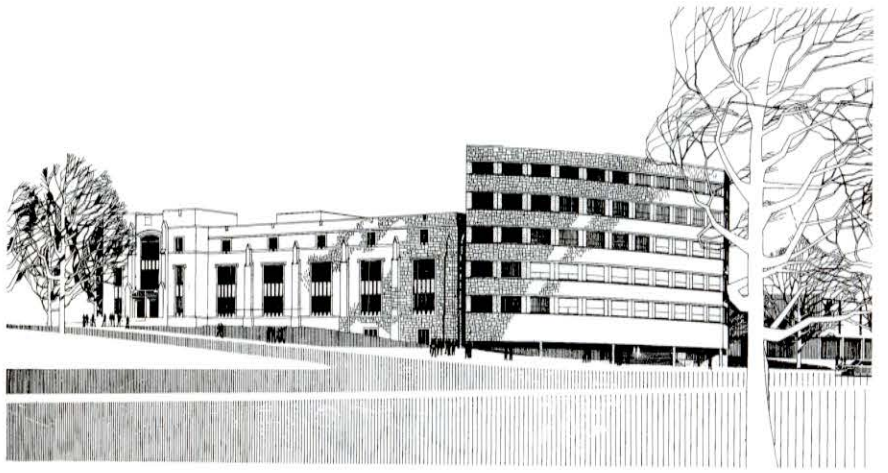

A Development on Times Square, New York, 1970
(in association with Emory Roth and Sons, with the assistance of Steven Izenour)

This project is at a very early stage of design; in fact, it is closer to a feasibility study than a design.

The site falls within the zoning areas of the theater district and the Times Square district, permitting floor area ratio bonuses to encourage theater- and tourist-oriented commercial development and certain design amenities such as arcades and inner-block pedestrian ways (a continuation of Shubert's Alley is explictly required). Our studies with Emory Roth and Sons analyzed combinations of theater, movie, commercial, restaurant, and parking development connected with a high-rise office block and later with a hotel complex. We investigated methods of signing and lighting that would enable Times Square to continue its traditional advertising glitter in spite of the redevelopment of its buildings.

Preliminary investigation of the requirements for the project suggested a decorated shed, a traditional Times Square configuration rather than the megastructural bridges, balconies, and spaces that have been proposed for the area. Times Square is not dramatic space but dramatic decoration. It is two-dimensional, decorated by symbols, light, and movement. Times Square is not Baroque drama but Byzantine drama — glittering surfaces of symbols for persuasion. Our complex will contain low public spaces, economically feasible and practical for air conditioning, that derive their impact from beautiful surface decoration and advertisement, that is, from ornament on simple spaces rather than from the penetrating forms of complex spaces. The model for the interiors will be the Art Deco surfaces in Rockefeller Center rather than the béton brut forms of Piranesian carceri. Shubert's Alley will be a brilliant tunnel pulsating with color and images.

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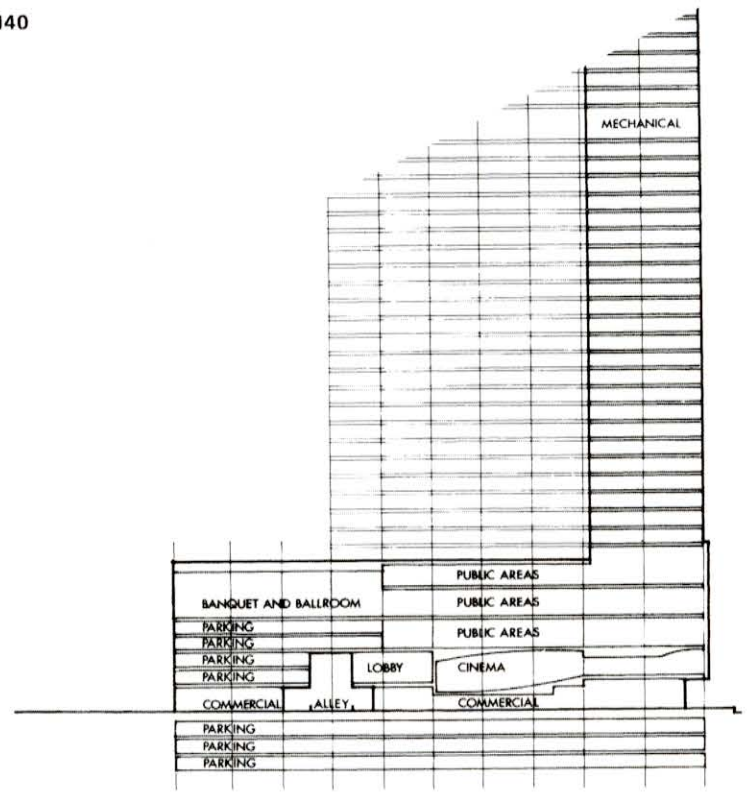

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Bato Warehouse, Greenwich, Connecticut, 1970
(with the assistance of W. G. Clark)

The site is on the main line of the New Haven Railroad and near the Connecticut Turnpike on flat grade surrounded by rocky embankments. The building is for a newsprint paper distributing firm that receives, stores, processes, and ships big and heavy spindles of paper that must be stored at ground level out of sunlight and kept dry. Subsoil conditions dictated the location of the building at the south end of the site. There was a tight design and building schedule, because the clients had to be out of their old quarters well within a year.

For the sake of the program and the schedule, our design was for a shed, chosen rather than created — a pre-engineered system of the Stran Company — rectangular in plan, steel-framed, gable-roofed, and sheathed in enameled aluminum with big-scale corrugations and other elegant standardized details. The canopied loading docks along the railroad siding and truck approach and the mezzanine windows at the northwest corner, reflecting the adminstrative offices, were the only exceptions to the "boring" image of the shed.

We kept to the schedule by overlapping the desiging and the negotiating of the construction contract until we hit the Greenwich Design Review Board. No transcripts are kept of their meetings, but among their comments we recall the following:

The program is wrong for the site. (later retracted)

How many trucks does your operation generate per day? (Mr. L. Pugliese)

Preengineered buildings are out. (later retracted)

The scale is not human. The architecture should be articulated and divided into several buildings to break it up. (Mr. Carl Braun)

Change the color. (Mr. Carl Braun)

Our board is sensitive to how the building will look from the moving trains. (Mr. Gerald Whiteford)

Your elevations leave me cold. (Mr. R. Pomerance)

There is more than one solution to a problem. Come up with something more imaginative. (Mr. Carl Braun)

The law instructs the Greenwich Review Board to encourage architecture which enhances the surroundings. (Mr. Gerald Whiteford)

Did you consider putting the building underground with parking on the roof? (Mr. Gerald Whiteford)

It became evident that some board members were against the existing industrial zoning of the site in the first place and were unable to separate their distaste for this use from their aesthetic assessment of the building, confusing the role of the Design Review Board with that of the Zoning Board. In their zeal for their own aesthetic, members were prepared to countenance such distortions of program and function as the removal of administration and supervision to a separate "interesting" pavilion and the use of a "human scale" sawtooth roof for a shed whose primary requirement was that it be leakproof.

After four submissions and/or meetings with the Design Review Board, at which our attempts to compromise were unsuccessful, Venturi and Rauch brought in a local architect as design consultant to allow the client to return to a building schedule. The design of the local architect was accepted at his first submission.

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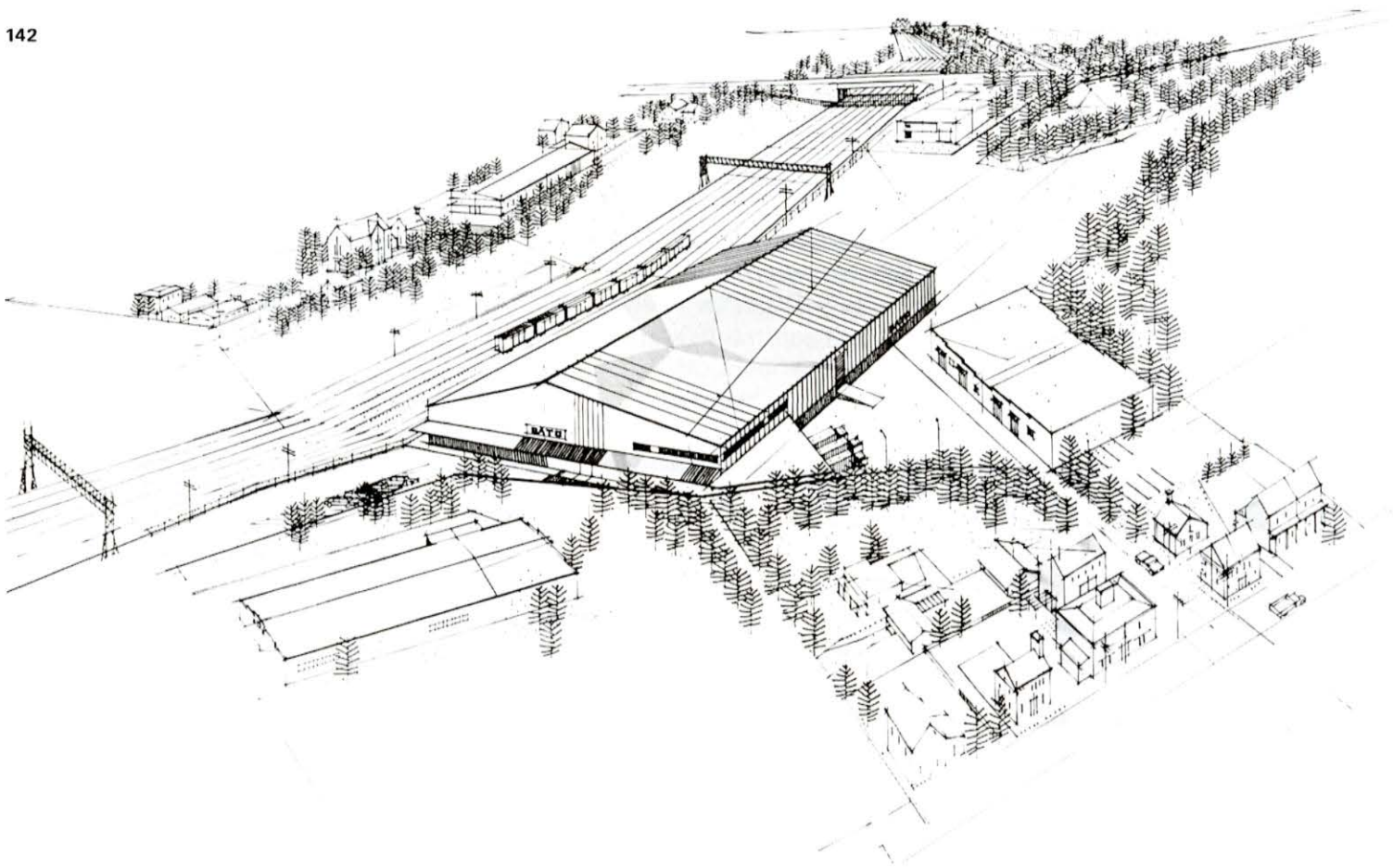


Eight Houses of Ill-Repute, 1967-1971

Housing is good, but houses are bad. This has been a maxim of Modern architecture. While it is true that concentrating on individual houses is socially irresponsible and technologically irrelevant, given the continuing housing crisis and the circumstances of practice for the individual architect, the little house should not be scorned. It is still the first job for most architects, for obvious economic and social reasons. Architecture is an expensive medium; therefore, conservative clients award big commissions to old architects or big firms. (Ironically, big responsibilities often go to young planners and to young architects in big firms.) The little house for a close friend or relative is usually therefore a first opportunity for the young architect to test theories and expand them. If his practice is slack, this at least allows him to put his heart and soul and a full work week into developing this one small idea, which is always a deepening experience. And if the client is poor, the years spent refining the plans while waiting for financing to be arranged can be a personal odyssey for the architect. Of our earlier houses, our beach and mother's houses were to some extent odysseys.

Norma Evenson has described how in the 1920s the young Le Corbusier theorized about La Ville Radieuse while doing nice little houses that he considered the formal prototypes for later urban-scale work of social and technological significance. However, although Le Corbusier saw his individual villas as prototypes for industrial housing, his models and those of Modern architecture in general have only slightly influenced mass housing — at least developers' housing in America — and American architects are still significantly uninvolved in housing. We believe this is because of Le Corbusier's and his followers' unreal outlook on the problems of housing. It does not preclude the possibility that the individual architect, working sympathetically with the merchant builder's real needs and constraints and his real media and symbols, can fulfill today (or at least share with others) the paradigmatic role that the architect has perhaps arrogantly claimed for himself.

Designing a house may also be the only opportunity for the architect to deal with a real user-client as opposed to a corporate committee or representatives of a public agency, and therefore to deal with the irrationalities of emotional needs and values. Later he has to depend on the richness of this experience (although in the context of different value systems) to eke out his statistical data when working on housing — at least for most projects and until recently, before "community architecture" brought representatives of user groups into architectural decision making. However, it is still a rare situation in which more than lip service is paid to community participation, or paid at a level that gives architects real information on users. Therefore, dependence on individual rich clients' emotions to tell you something about collective poor clients' emotions, although imperfect, is often better than nothing.

For an architect who is not just starting out, a project for a house can serve as a punctuation in his career as well as a point of departure. It is an opportunity literally to seclude himself in order to focus his thinking, to be able to control the whole in a way that distills and clarifies and informs the bigger work at hand. The eight houses illustrated here were such exercises.

The Frug House, Princeton, New Jersey, 1966

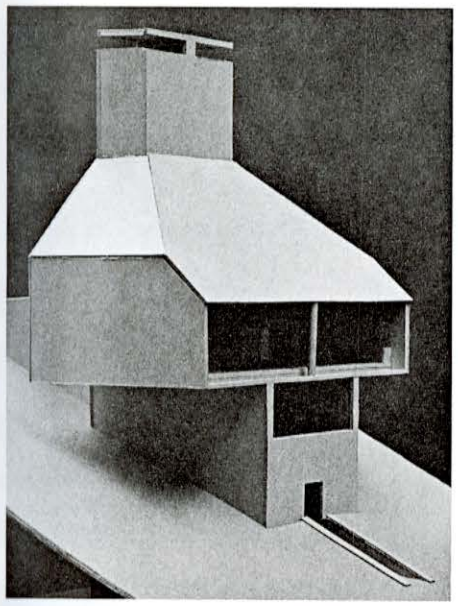
A project for a pavilion near a private swimming pool to be used as a guest house, dressing rooms, and place for parties for the teen-age children of the family (thus the name — the frug being a youthful dance rage at the time). Our clients were friends with catholic tastes to whose exurban Cape Cod cottage we had added a Colonial-style wing several years before, and for whom, previously, Frank Lloyd Wright had designed a Usonian manor on the same site.

Our first design was for the very steep and wooded site just below the swimming pool. It was a shingled frame structure with a shed-hip roof ascending as a base for a big chimney. Inside, directed toward the chimney at the center of the back wall, these roof pitches focused the space onto the fireplace, so that the little room, echoing in form the hood in plan and section, became almost secondary to its huge fireplace. But there is a counterfocus in this room opposite the fireplace and toward the outside: The exaggerated height of the hip is balanced by a very low eave in the front that forces the eye down to the beautiful stream below. Integral to the architecture inside is the built-in furniture of seats, counters, stairs that makes the little space less cluttered and breaks the symmetry of the whole. There is a bedroom and bath in the masonry base, and the approach is over a drawbridge. The individual elements in this little house are big (the wide front door, for instance), and we have exaggerated the unity (almost every element inflects toward and is dependent on the fireplace and chimney) to give it the poignant monumentality of a little building with big scale.

Unfortunately this duckling was never built. The site proved too difficult and the design too elaborate. The second design located on the flat grade beside the pool is more like a shed. Its plan is a portion of a circle, it is stuccoed block, one story high (except for the dressing mezzanine), with a flat roof of wood planks. This building is also oriented beyond itself — in this case toward the pool. As in the first Frug House, the plan of the whole echoes the plan of the fireplace; the building is an extension of the fireplace. Its elements are big, and its furniture is built in, to decrease the formal clutter and increase the scale.

The eye tends to complete the chopped-off circle of the plan suggesting a scale beyond the scale of the building. But the front elevation relieves the monumentality through the duality of the big sliding door. When the door is open in the summer for a barbecue, the sleeping bunks are covered and accessible through a door in the door. The door in a door is the entrance in the winter.

The second Frug House too was not built.



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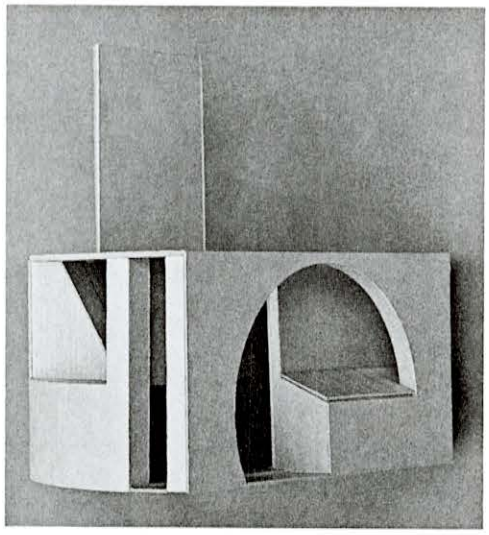

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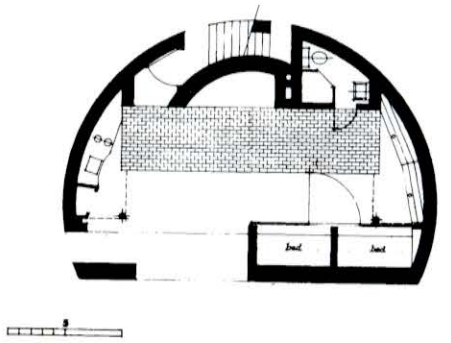

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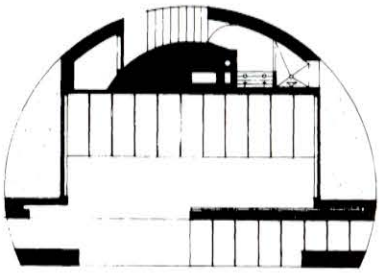

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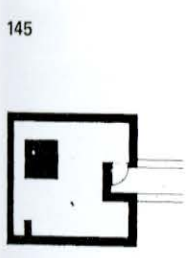

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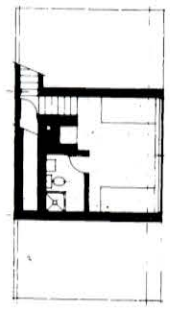

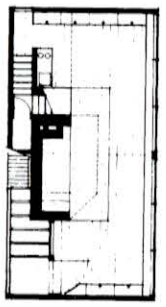

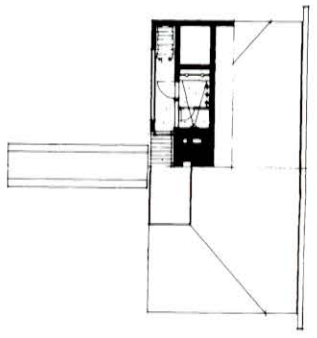

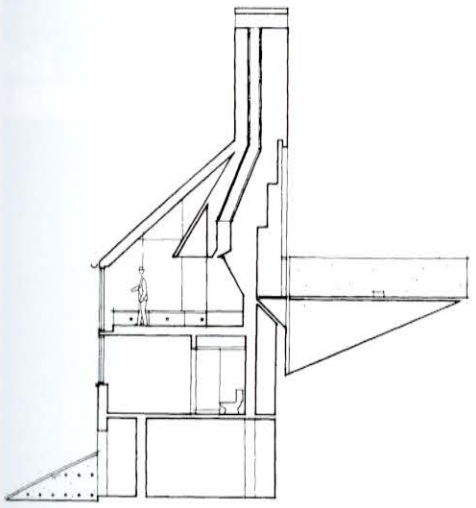

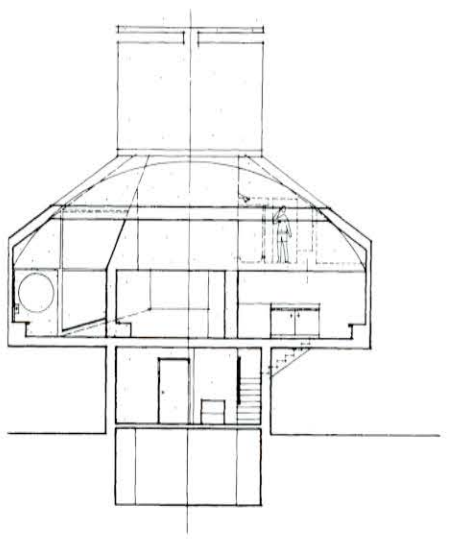

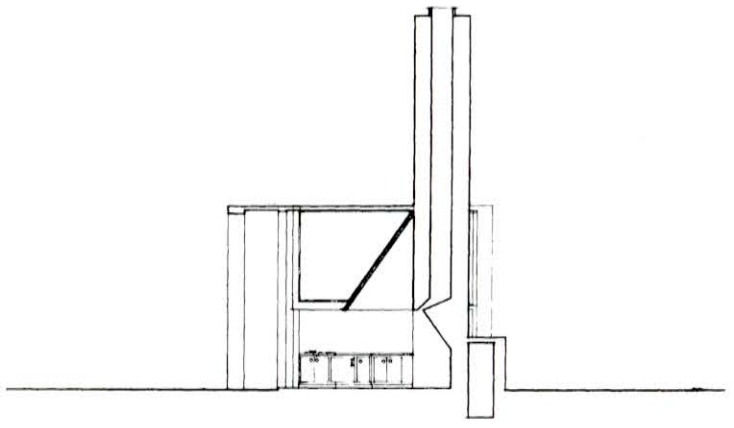

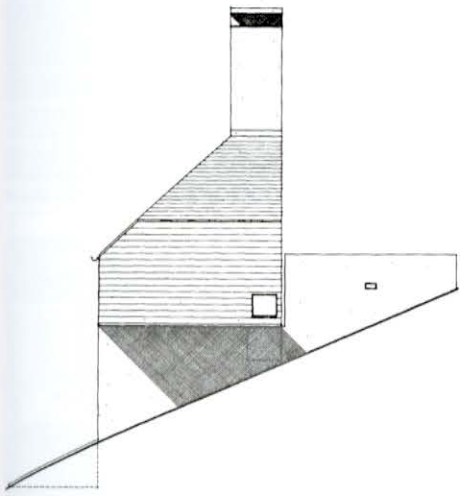

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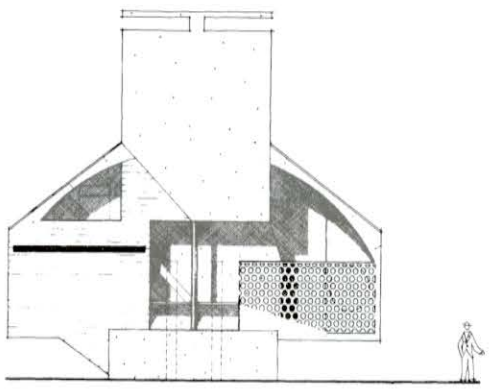

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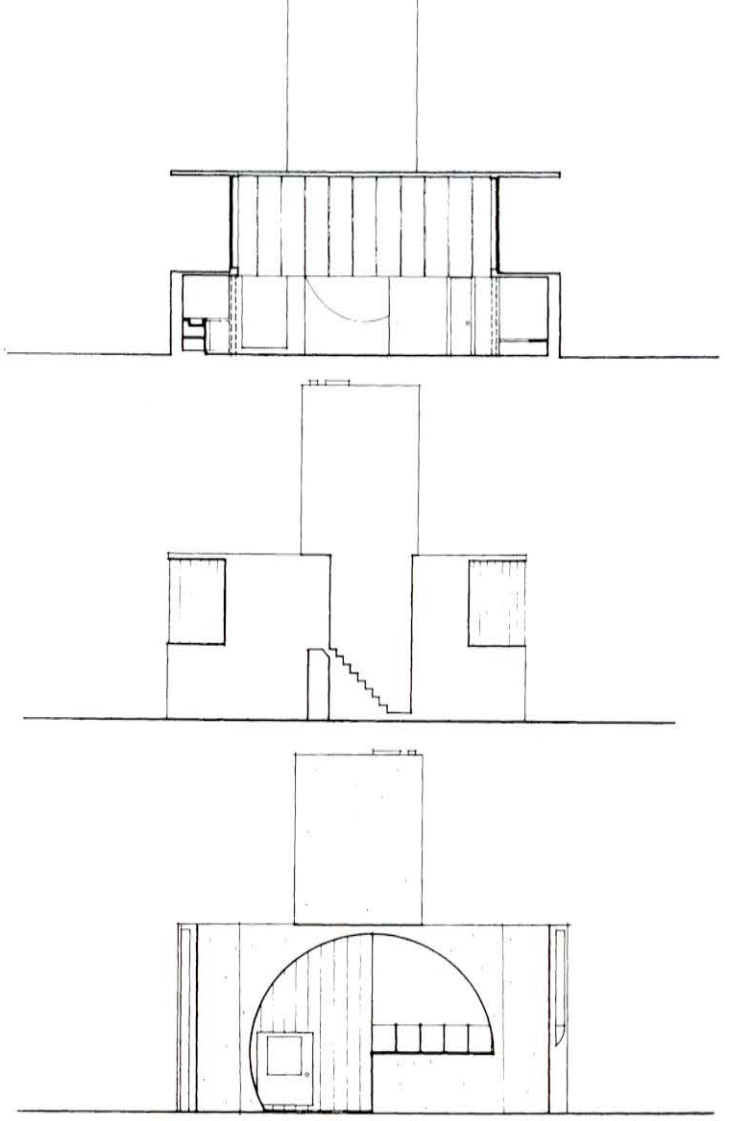

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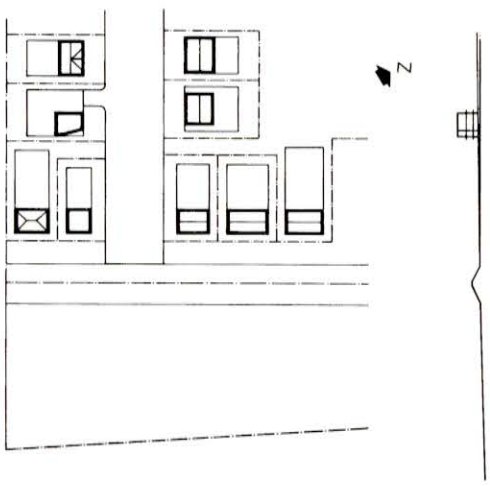
The Lieb House, Loveladies, New Jersey, 1967
(with the assistance of Gerod Clark)

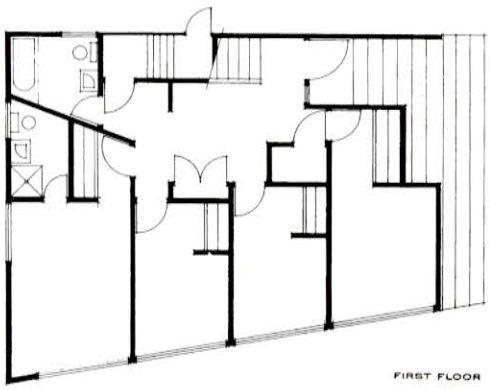
It is easy to explain what the Lieb House is not: It is not a tasteful, natural-wood-shingled configuration of complex and contradictory wings and shed roofs. It is an ordinary shed with conventional elments. It uses asbestos shingles with imitation wood-grain relief, once the indigenous building material on Long Beach Island. And it uses big elements, such as the stair that starts out the width of the house and gradually decreases to three feet on the second floor. Its unconventional elements are explicitly extraordinary when they do occur, as in the big round window that looks like a 1930s radio loudspeaker. It is a little house with big scale, different from the houses around it but also like them. It tries not to make the plaster madonna in the birdbath next door look silly, and it stands up to, rather than ignores, the environment of utility poles.

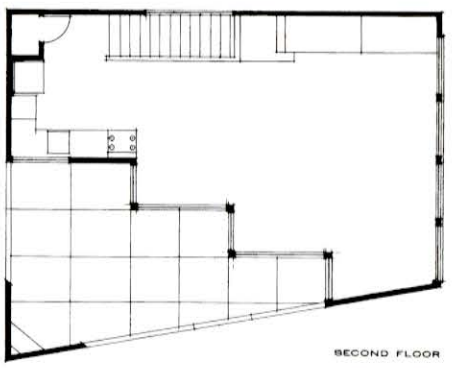
156. Site plan

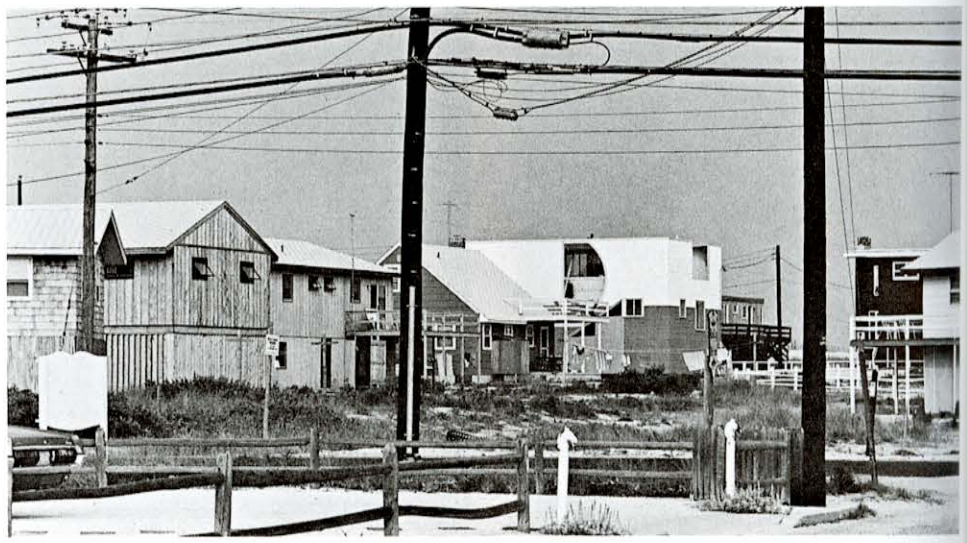
157. First floor plan

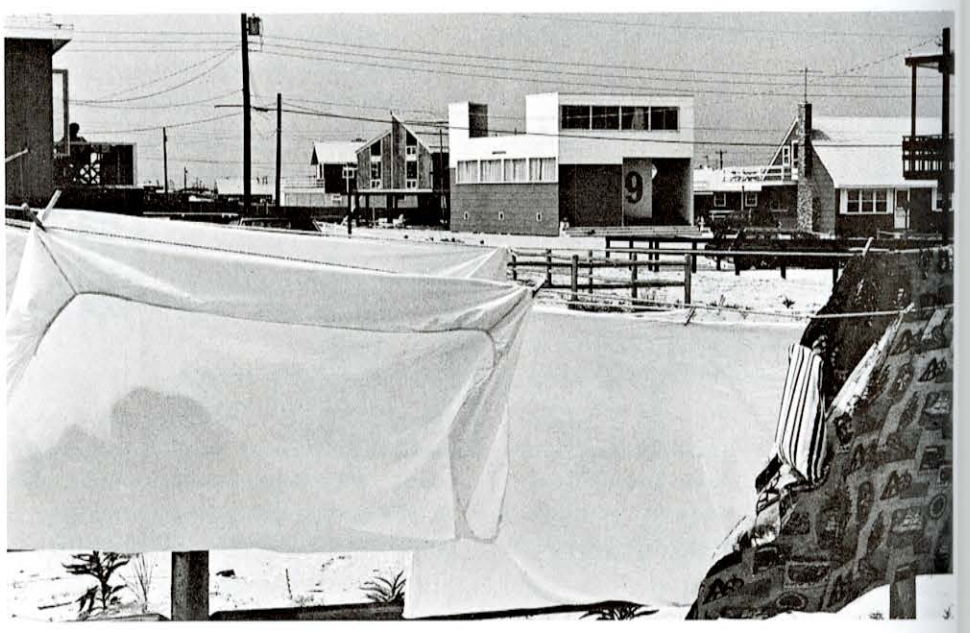
158. Second floor plan

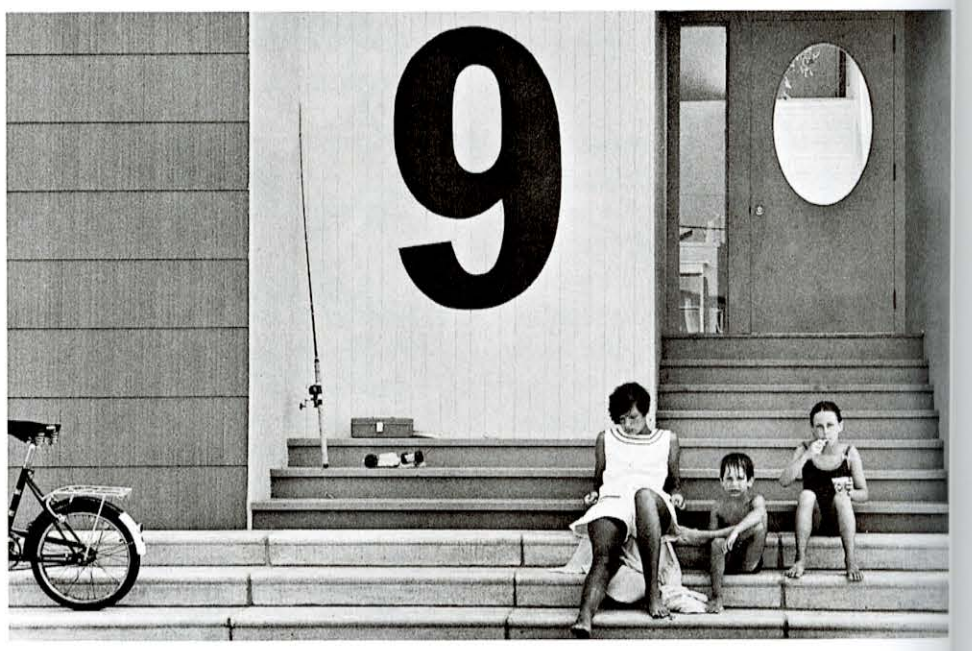












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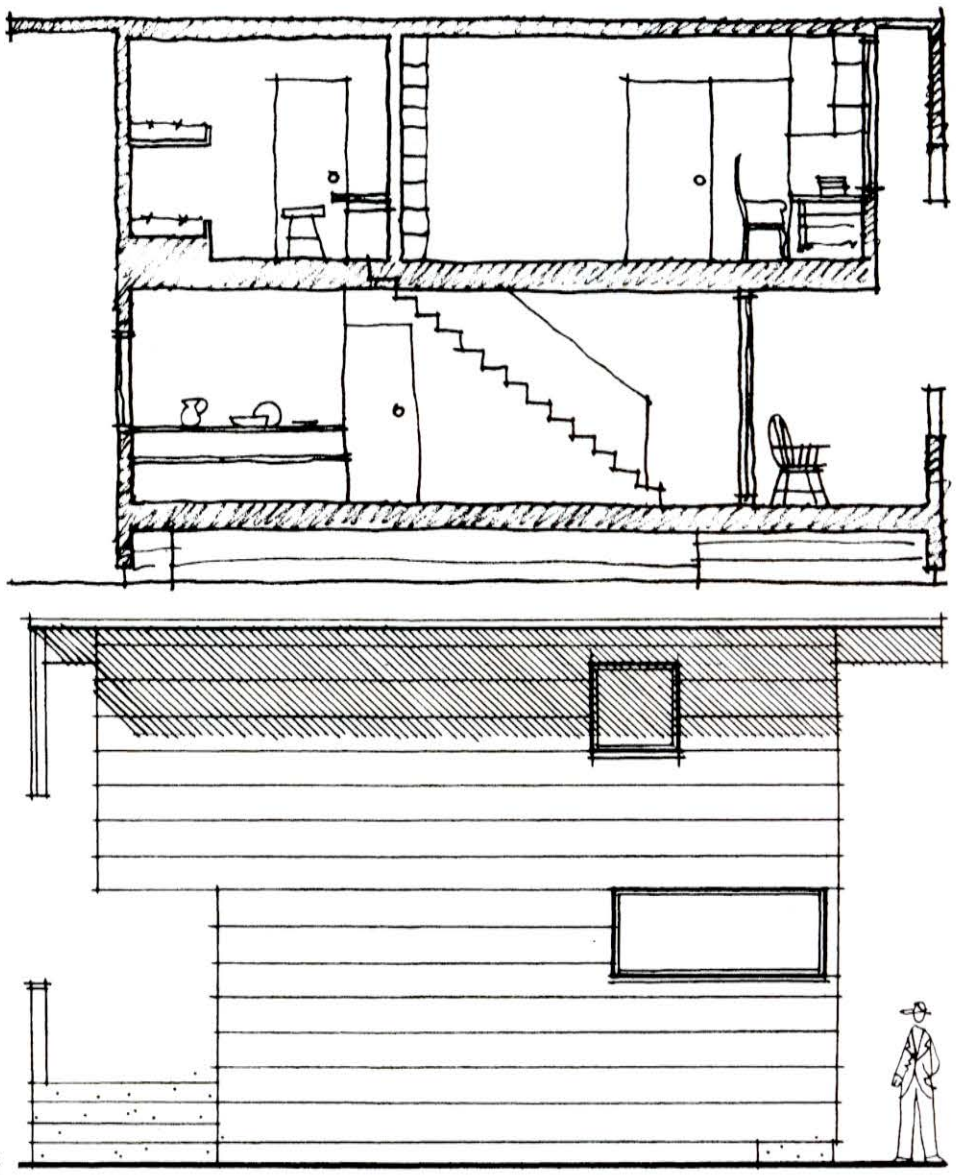
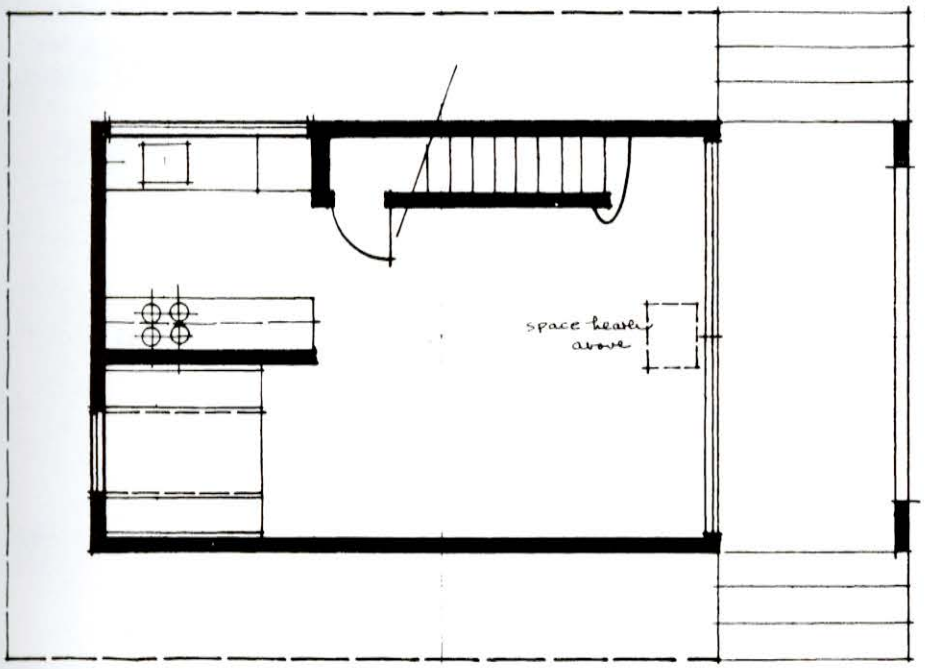
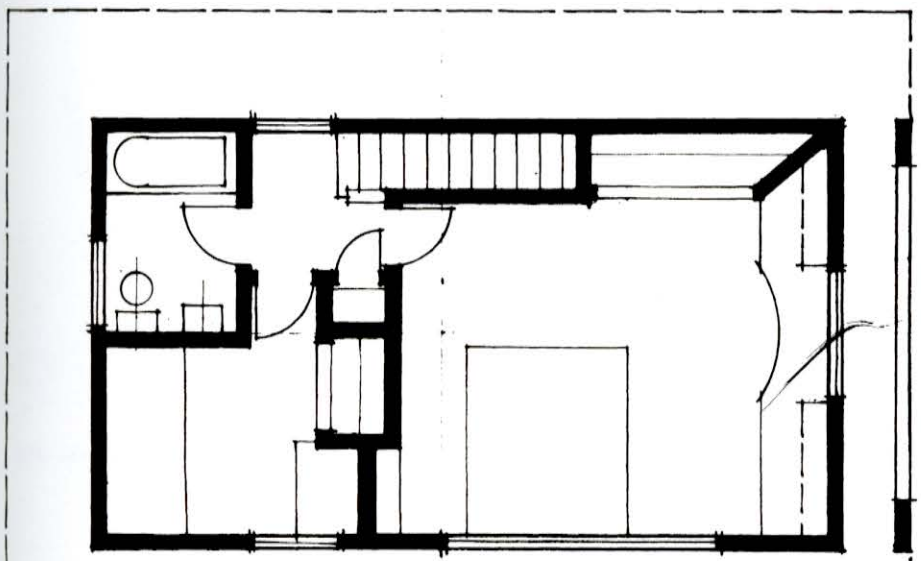
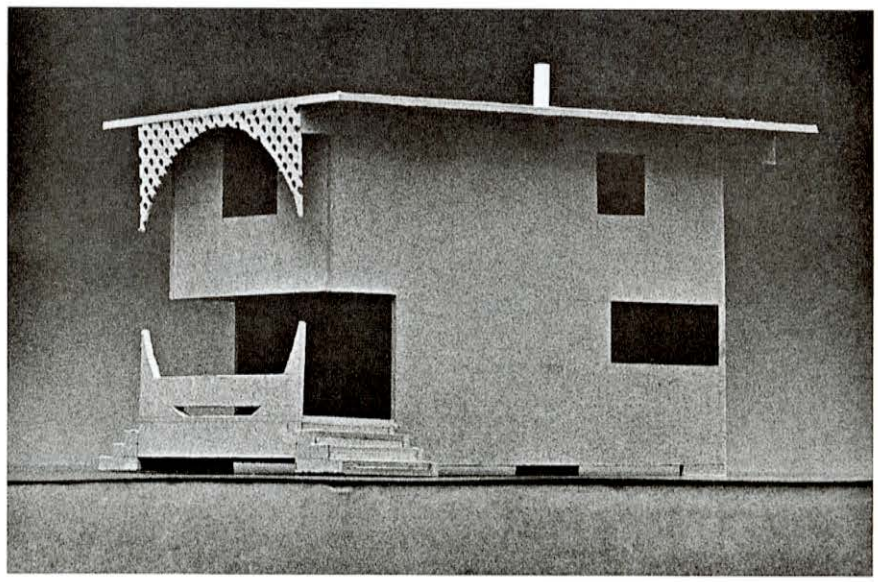
The Hersey House,
Hyannisport, Massachusetts,
1968

This is our most literal decorated shed. It is a summer beach cabin for a small family on Cape Cod. To satisfy the budget, it is a simple box of asbestos shingles with a flat roof and the proverbial Mary Anne behind. We applied ornament to the front porch to increase the scale of the facade. The circular opening suggested by the curve of the lattice above and the rail below extends beyond the sides of the facade and includes both stories — like the giant order on a Classical porch. We hoped to achieve thereby a poignant shed, both little and big, dumb and sophisticated. It is hard for an architect to design a dumb building, but we think we succeeded. Unfortunately it was not dumb enough (or we were not clever enough) to meet the budget, and it did not get built.









163. First floor plan

164. Second floor plan

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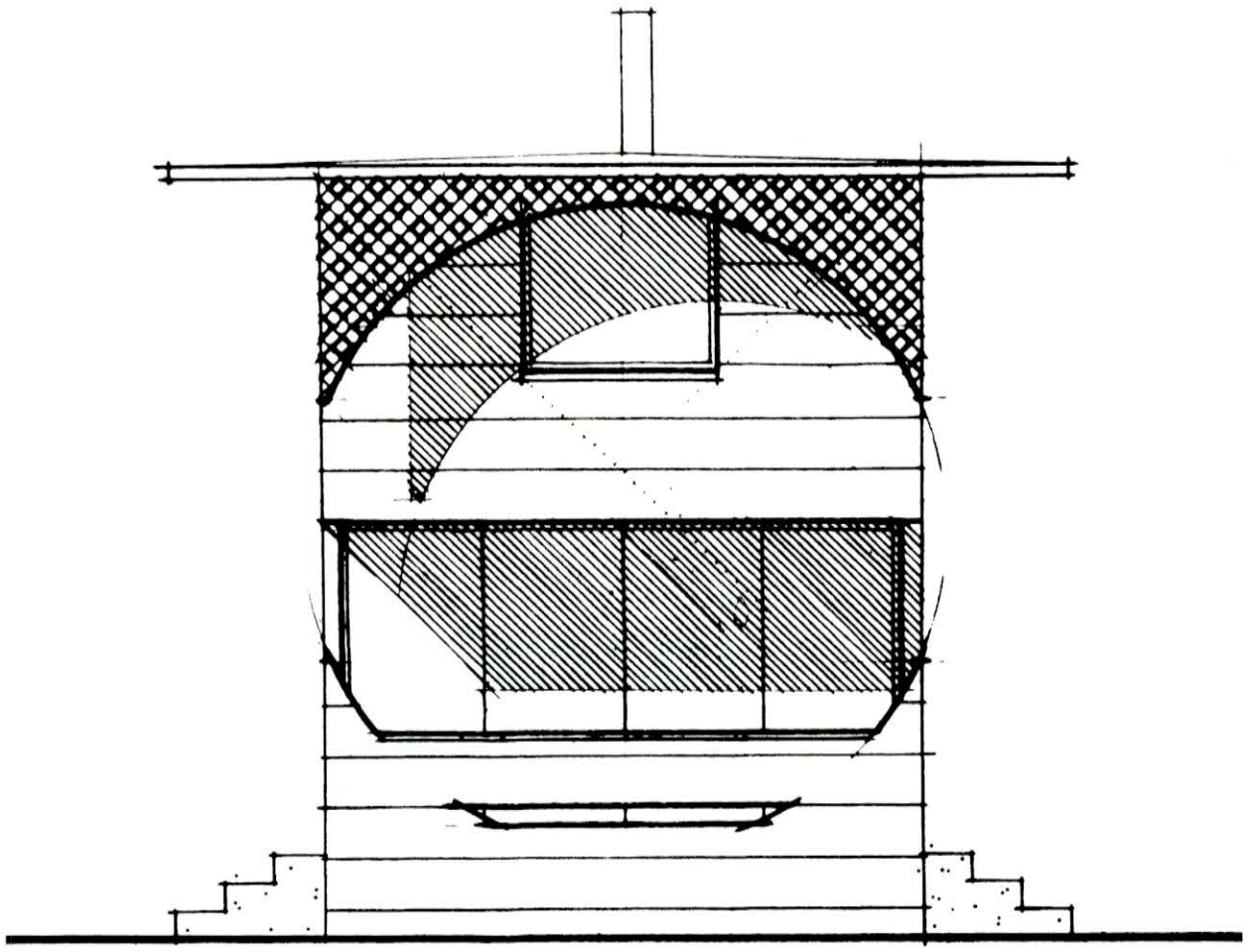
The D'Agostino House,
Clinton, New York, 1968
(with the assistance of
W. G. Clark)



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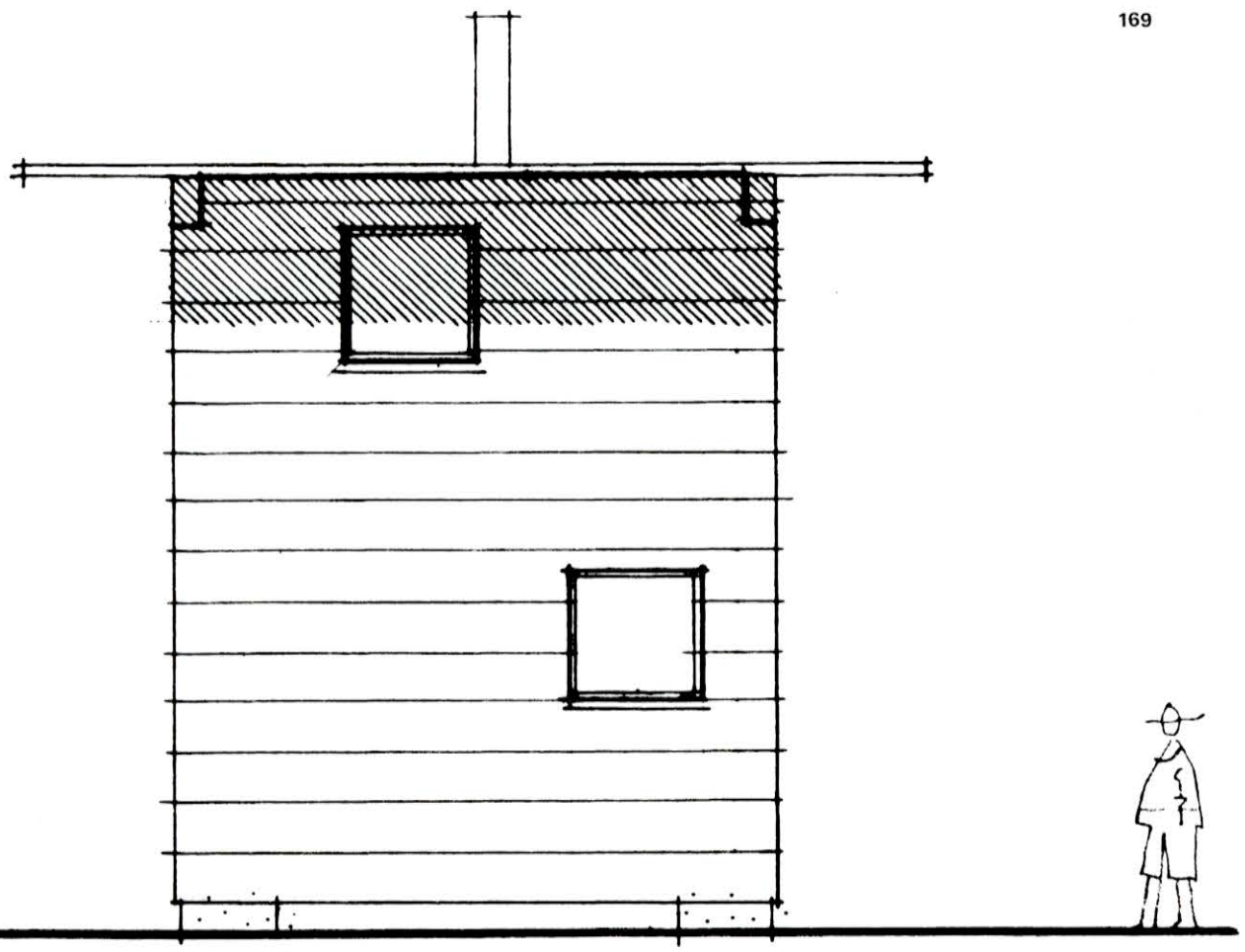
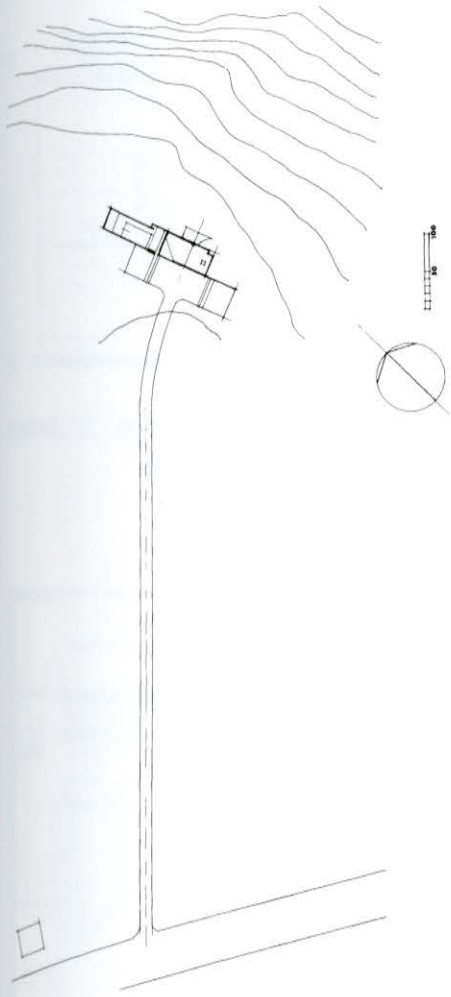
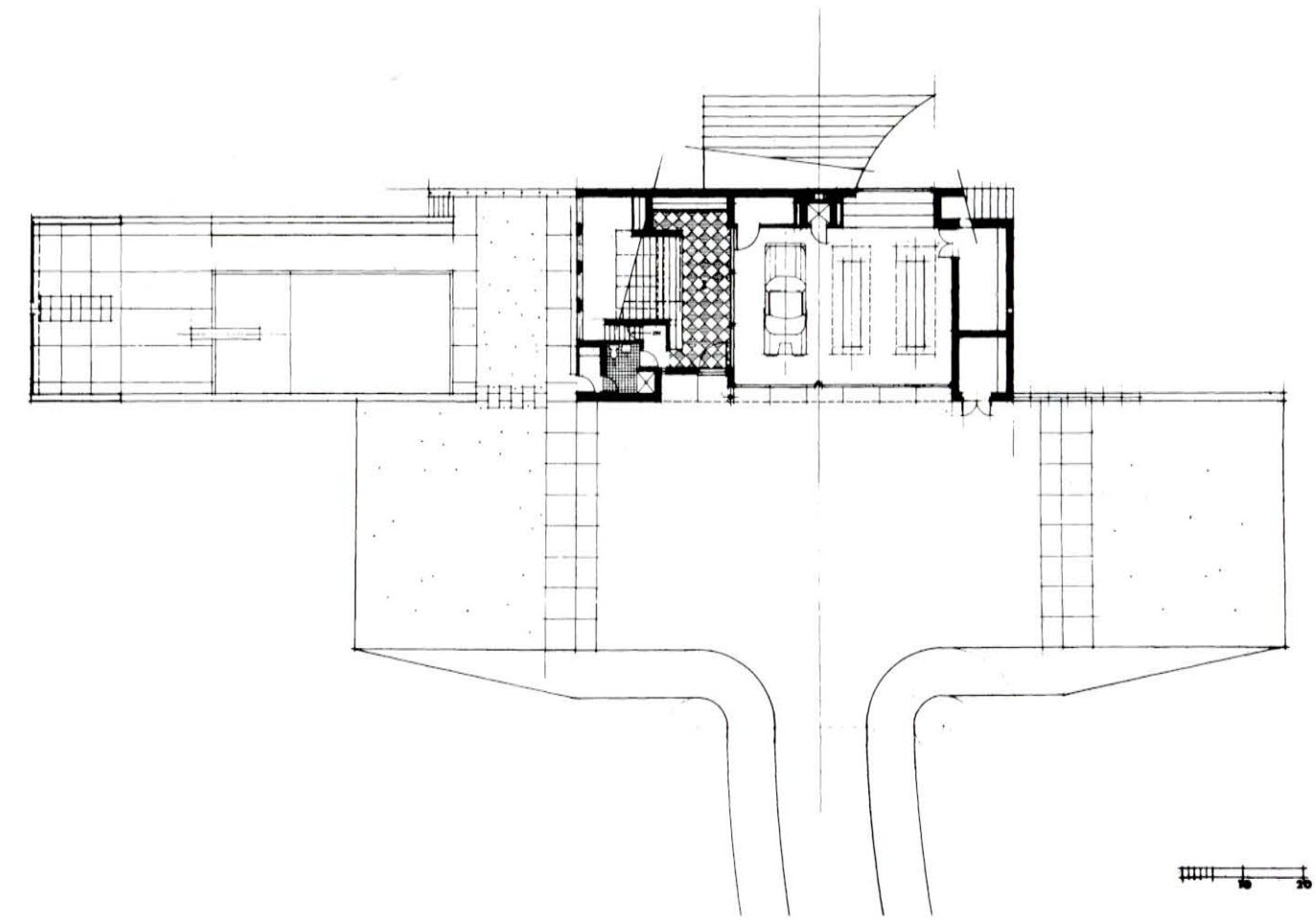


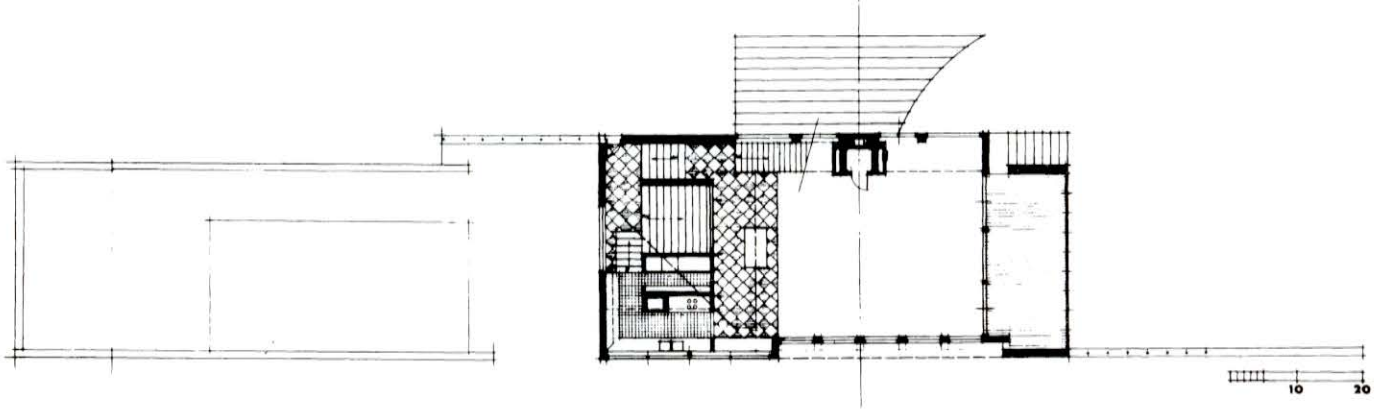
This is an admitted duck for a unique program, a rural site, and a generous budget. It is for a couple who want to enjoy the varied views surrounding a beautiful plateau in northern New York State. For this reason the main floor is raised half a level above grade. The house is made of gray-glazed brick to match the color of the weathered planks of a nearby barn. The facade toward the long approach forms a bold silhouette with a stepped parapet reminiscent of Dutch architecture. The bold scale must accommodate the automobile as well, because the garage is the usual entrance in this snowy climate. Rather than via a mean garage into a back door to the kitchen, you enter through a "beautiful" garage (white-glazed brick with black headers) onto a "grand" stairway and up to the piano nobile, as if from the carriageway of an eighteenth-century Neapolitan villa. The sunken auto court has sloped sides to facilitate snow plowing. The swimming pool, sunken too, is on a side axis, to protect bathers from prevailing winds, and it recalls the sunken gardens of a George Howe Norman house. The pavilion at the end of the pool is a small parody of the big house. The bedroom on the top floor is vaulted in wood — like the Polish synagogues of the eighteenth century. We hope this one gets built.



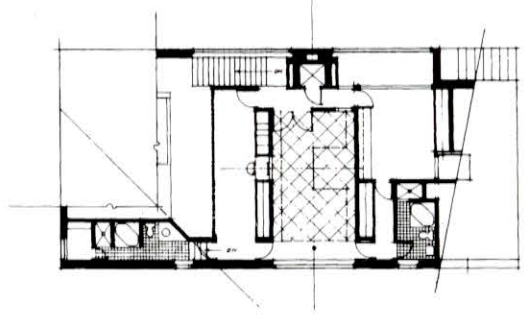
170. Site plan



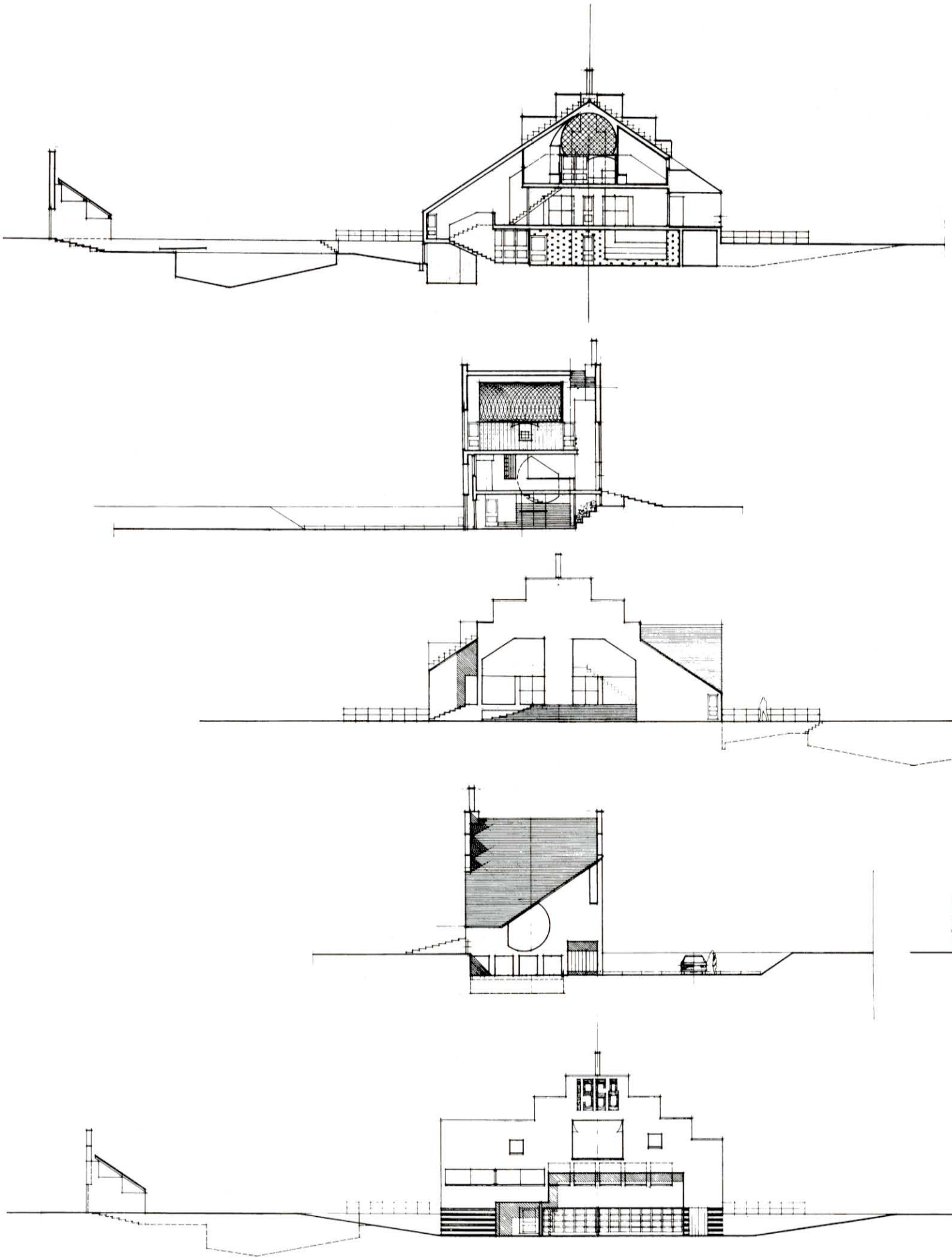
171. Ground floor plan



172. First floor plan



173. Second floor plan



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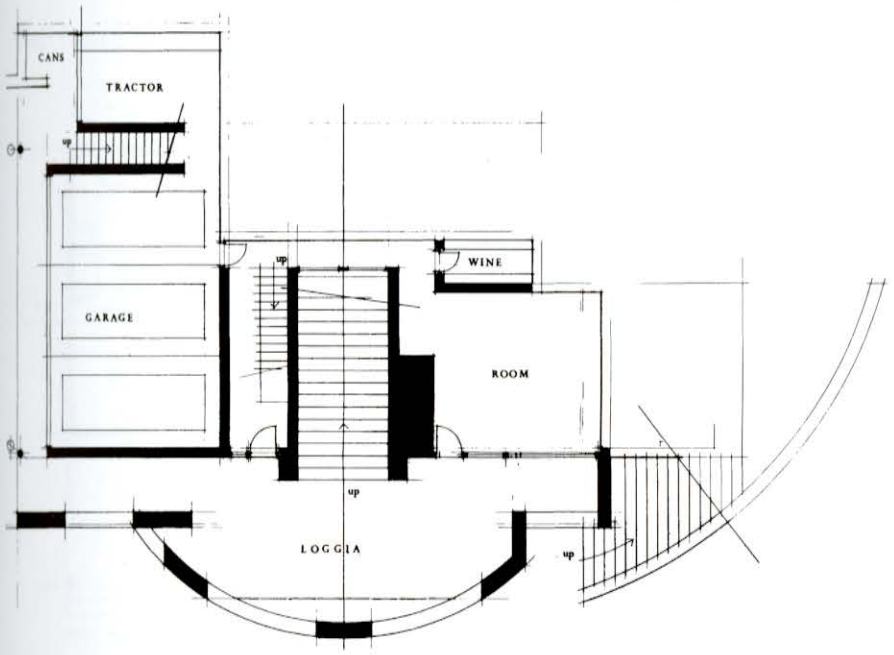
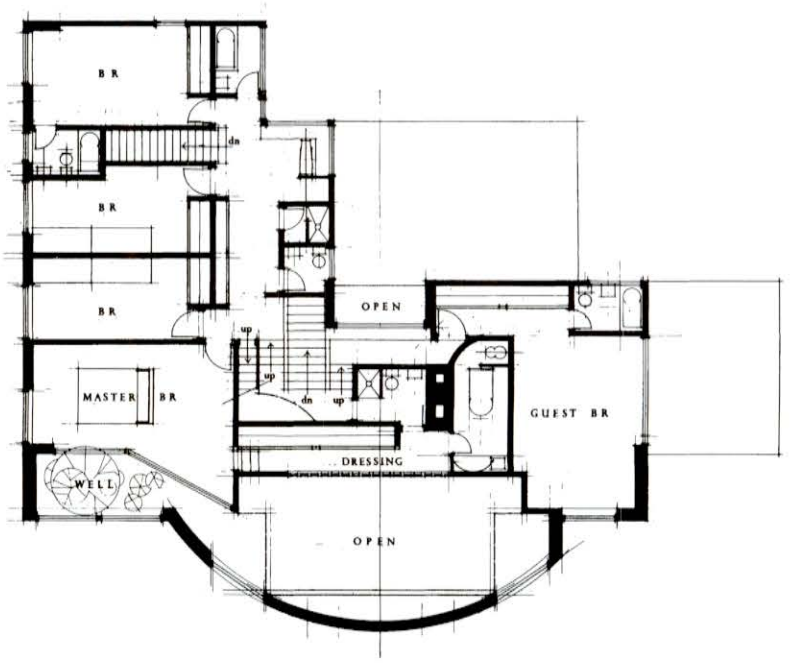
The Wike House, Devon, Pennsylvania, 1969

This duck will not get built because the housing market in suburban Philadelphia abounds in large old houses. Our clients found a beautiful Queen Anne manor, circa 1931, on 12 acres, about the time we firmed up the estimate of our schematic design; they naturally bought the manor because it was twice the size of our design and one-third the price. The program for this family with three small children and a live-in children's nurse was Lutyens-like in scope: a central hall for entertaining, one and one-half stories high, shallowly vaulted and spanning the long way, with a window facing the central exterior stairwell. There is a library remote from the children, a breakfast room with southeast exposure for plants, and a kitchen somewhat like a Usonian "work space" that, despite the Edwardian complexity of the plan, was to control the entrances and dominate the main floor. The clients wanted a "formal" setting for their eighteenth-century antiques, and therefore the plan starts out symmetrically. Note particularly the venturi effect of the exterior stair that splits the house from the lower loggia in the front to the upper entrance in the rear (you have to fight your way into this house). We made the front of the house like a bold Vanbrugh manor with deep shadows to be read from the road down the hill. With its rectangular geometry of big, frequent windows, the auto entrance facade is like an Elizabethan manor house, but without the symmetry. With its functional accomodations to inside needs and with the swimming pool-play area outside, the back is pre-TAC Gropius. Facades are yellow brick like Holkham Hall. The porch side and the back are frame construction clad with flush boards painted the same color as the brick.

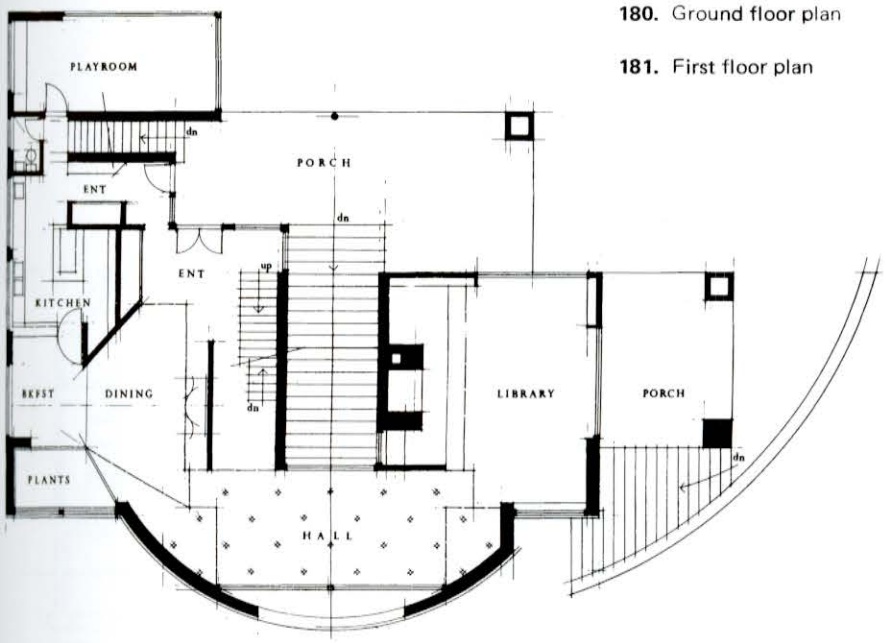
179. Site plan





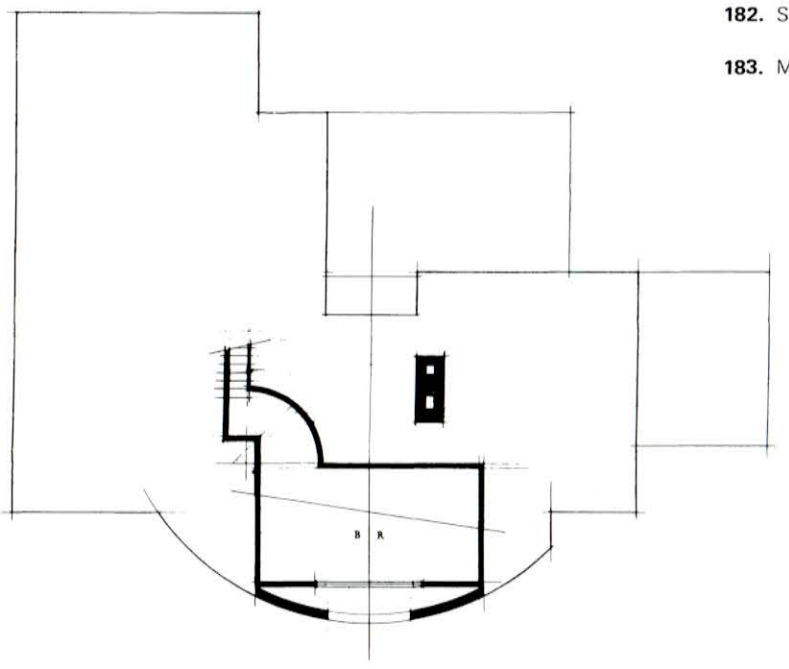
180. Ground floor plan

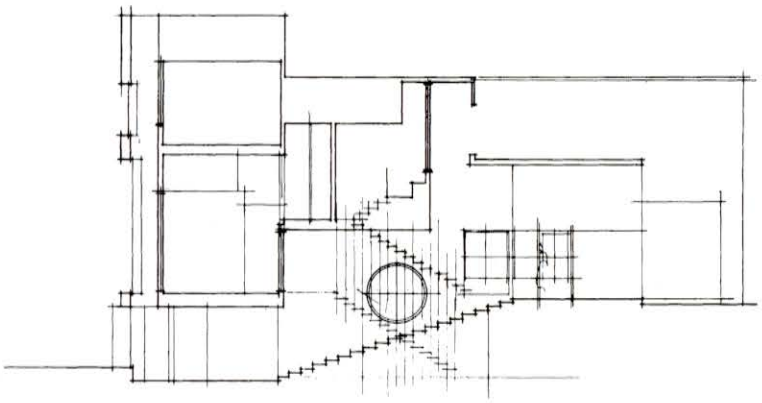
181. First floor plan

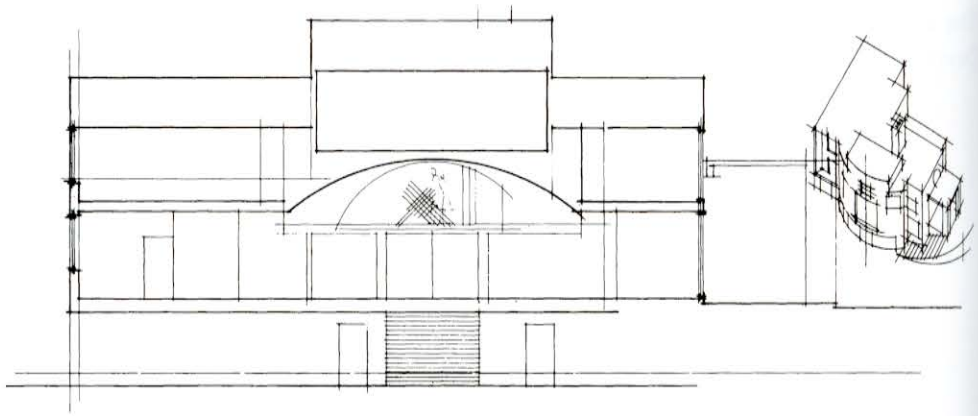


182. Second floor plan

183. Mezzanine plan







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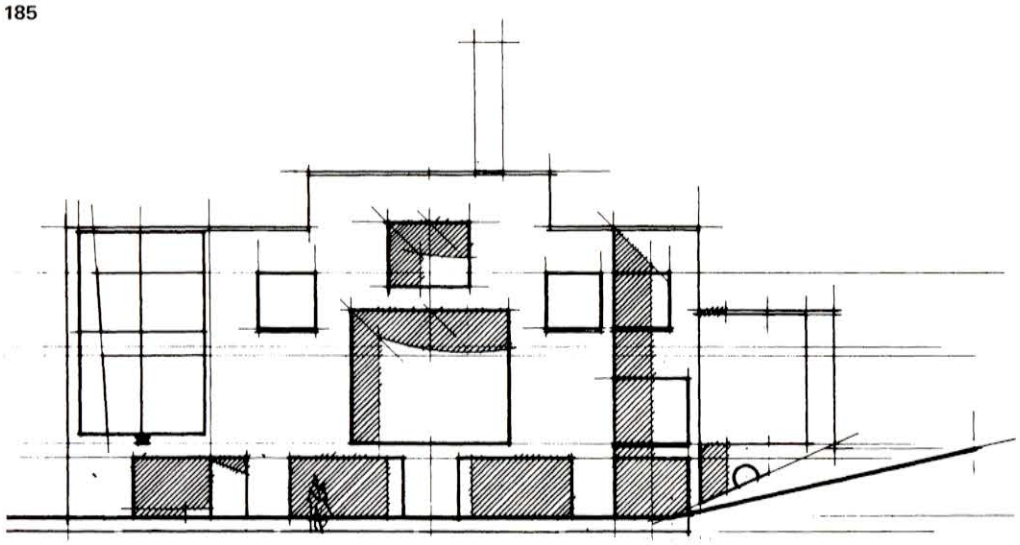
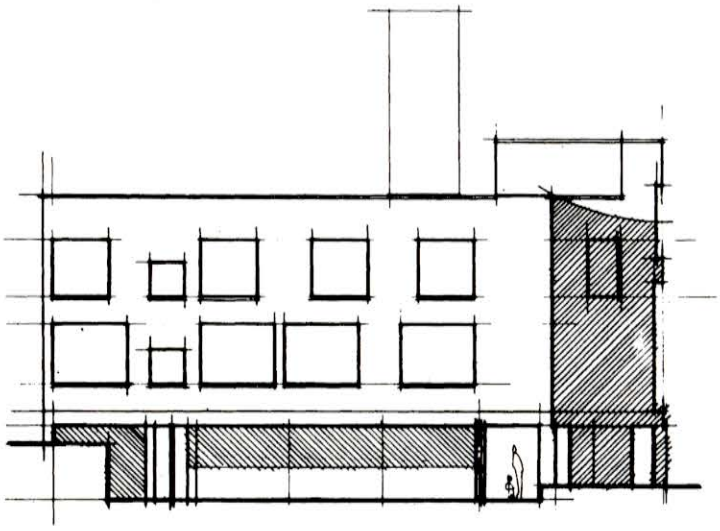
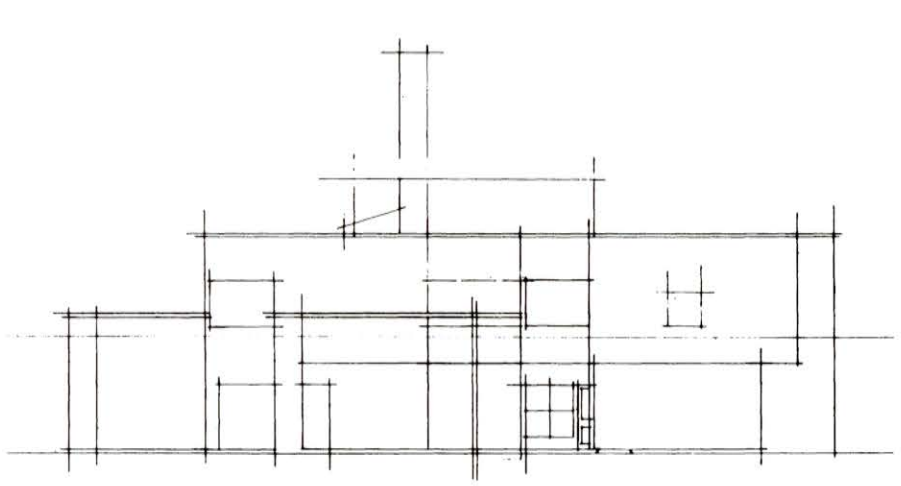


FRONT



CAR ENTRANCE



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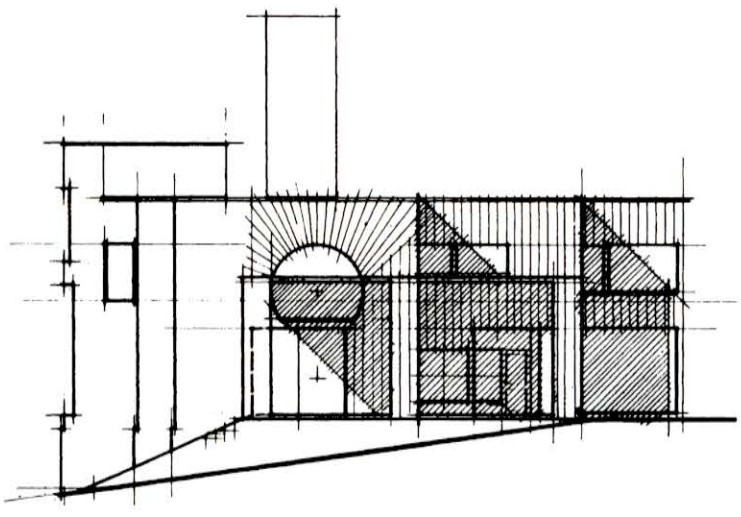

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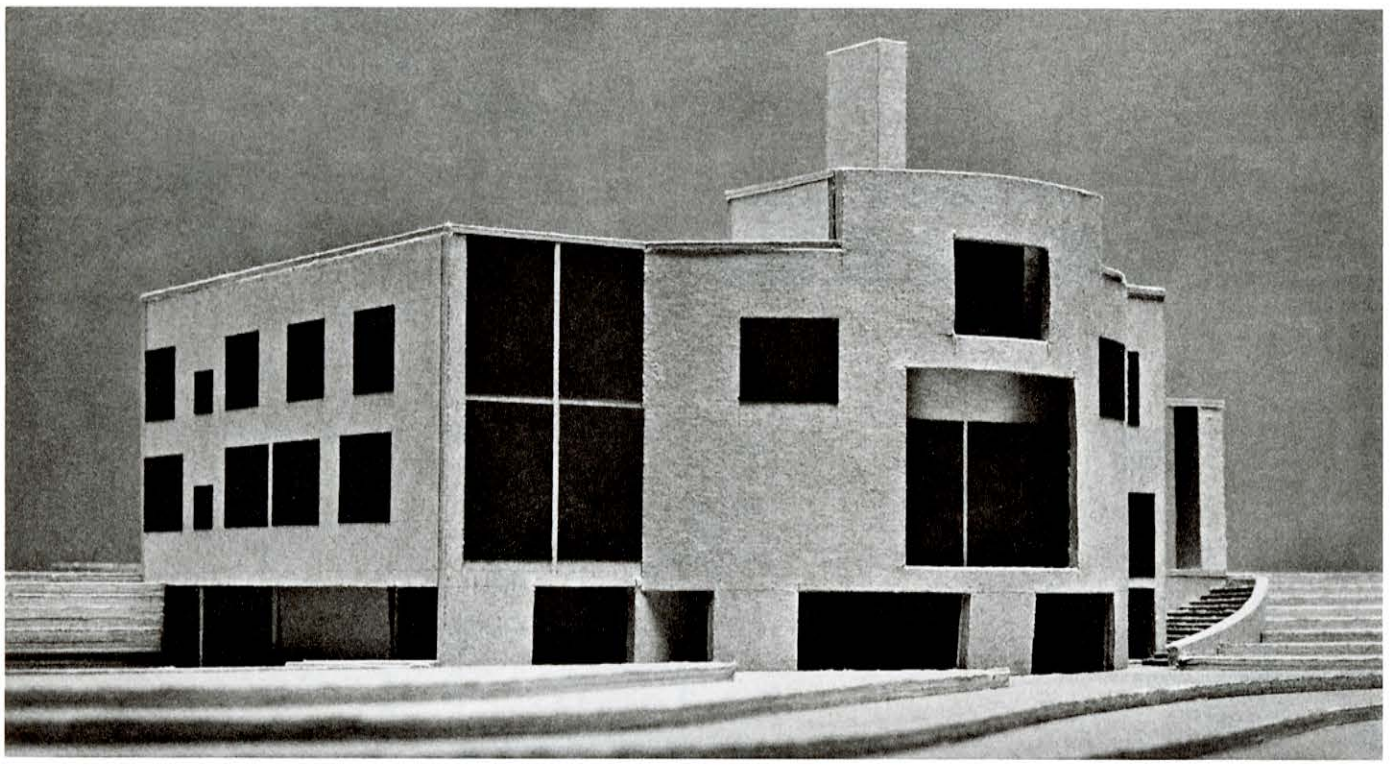
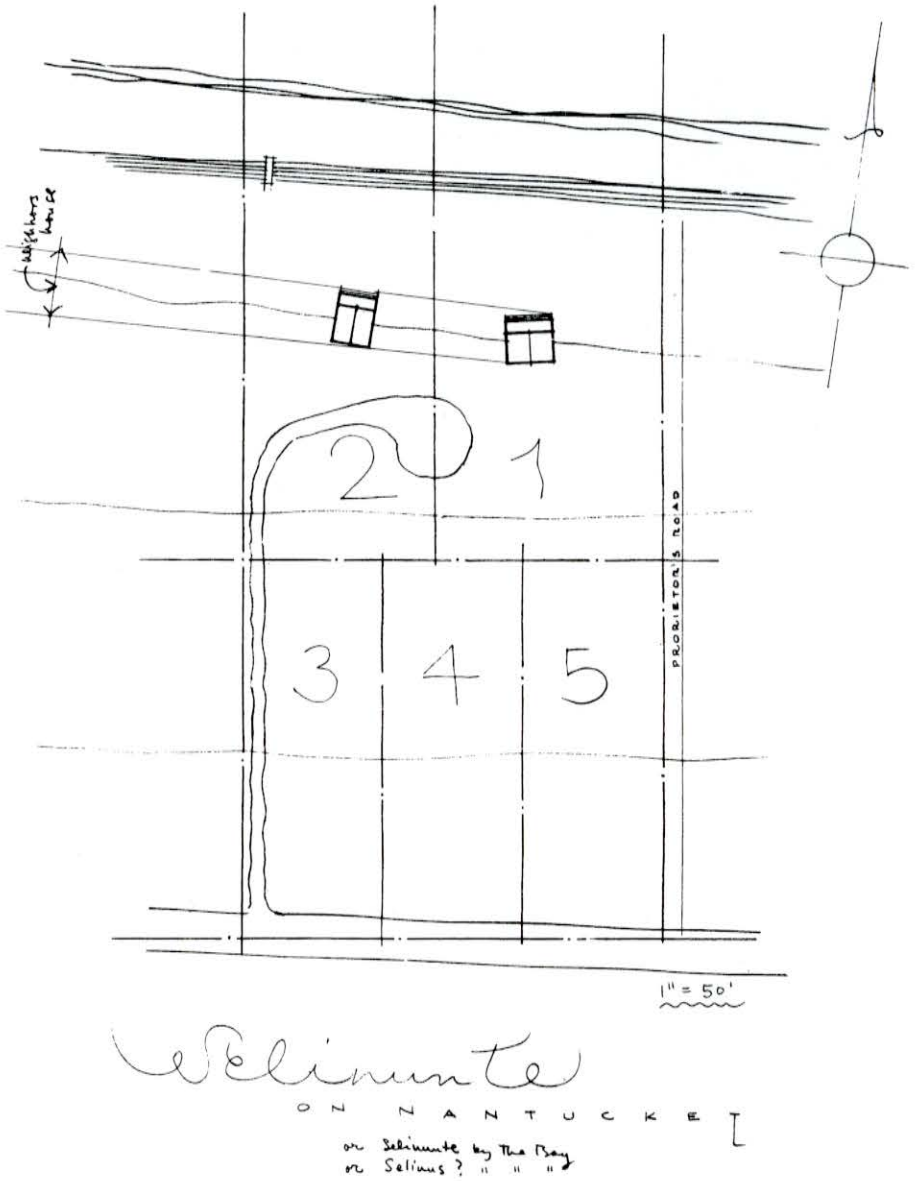


186

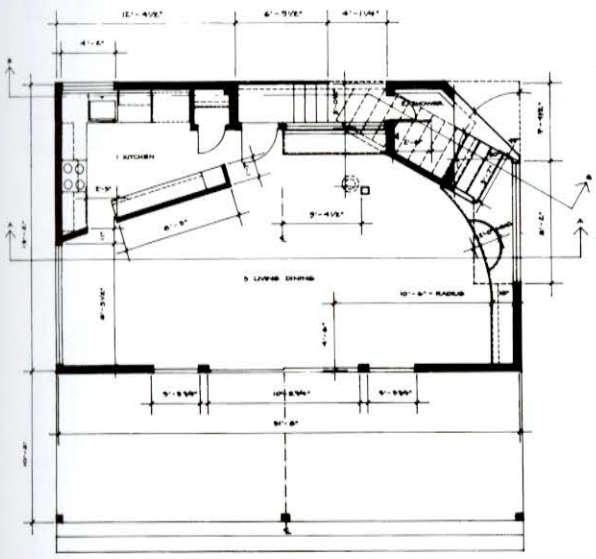
The Trubek and Wislocki Houses, Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, 1970
(with the assistance of Terry Vaughan)

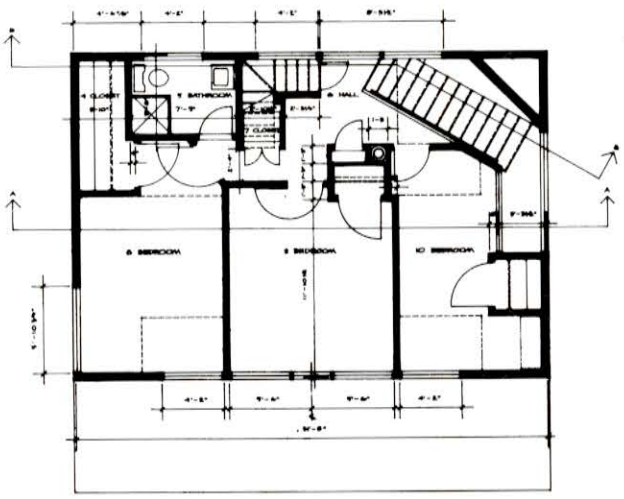
These are two shingled summer houses for a Yale professor and his family and for a related family. The larger house is complex and contradictory; the smaller house is ugly and ordinary. The position of the smaller house blocks the sight of a neighbor's house to the west. The west side elevation of the larger house has a single big window. Its proportions are like the other windows in the house, and its sill is proportionately higher (4 feet 3 inches from the floor inside) to enhance and obscure the scale. The great Palladian window on the north facade of Mount Vernon is not quite the same thing, but we were thinking of it. Our cottages are like the nineteenth-century Siasconset fishermen's cottages but with some Shingle Style and Art Nouveau complexities inside. They are also two little temples on the plain by the sea at Selinunte with three bigger-than-usual steps in front to sit on.

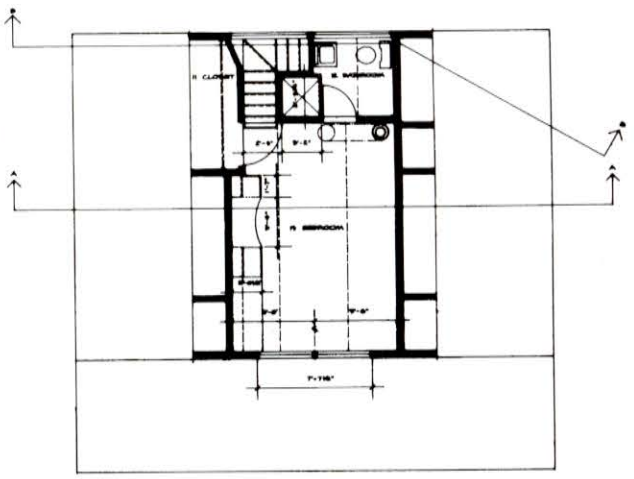


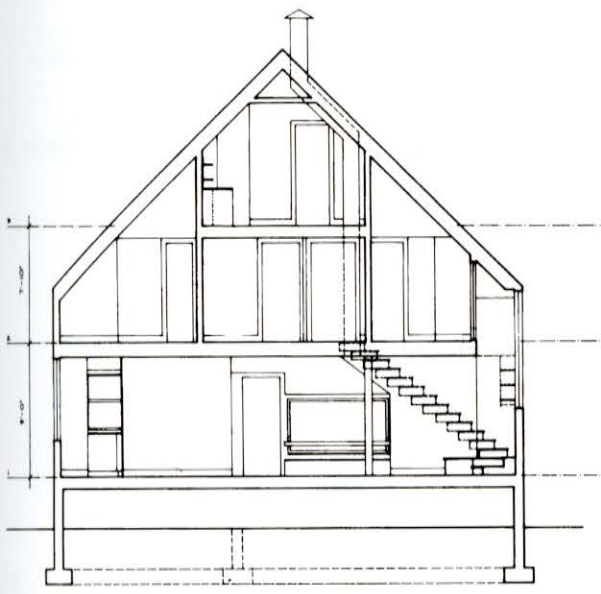
187. Site plan

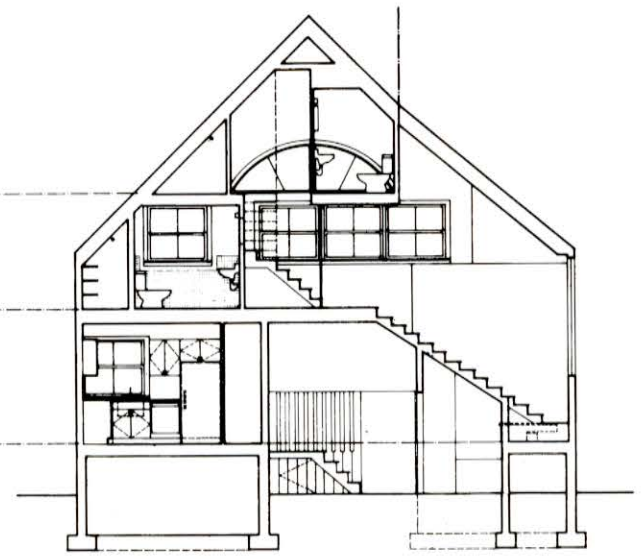
188. Trubeck house

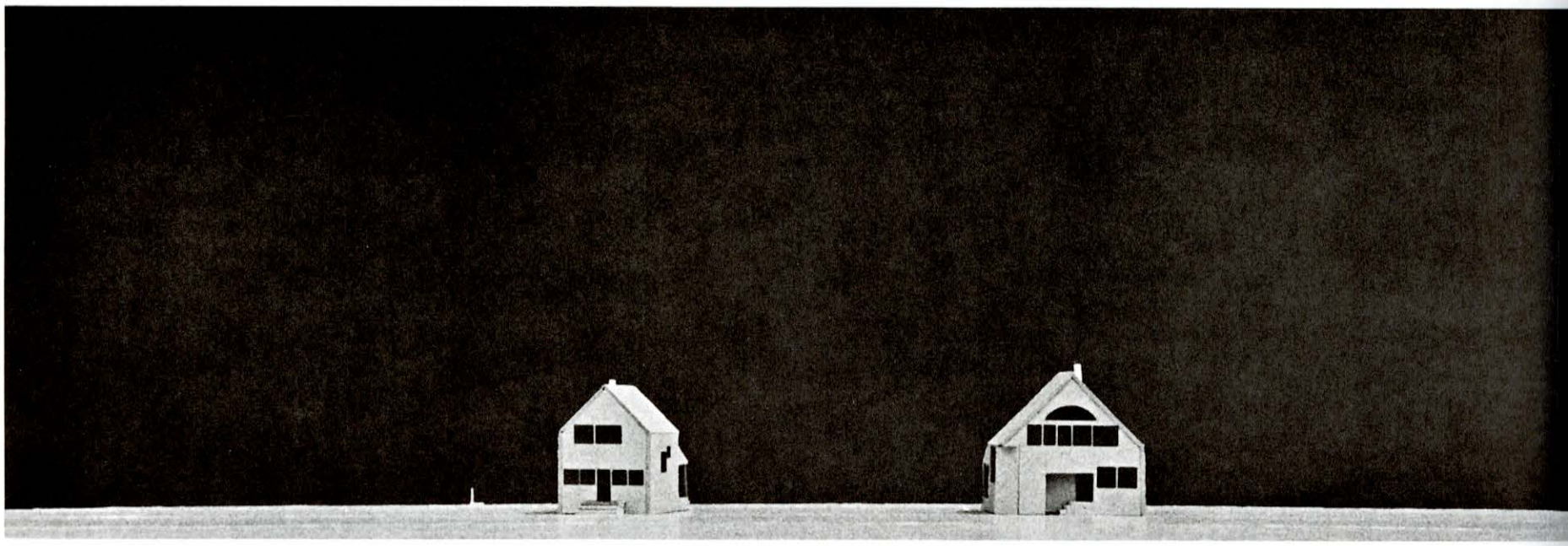

FIRST FLOOR PLAN


SECOND FLOOR PLAN


THIRD FLOOR PLAN


SECTION AA


SECTION BB



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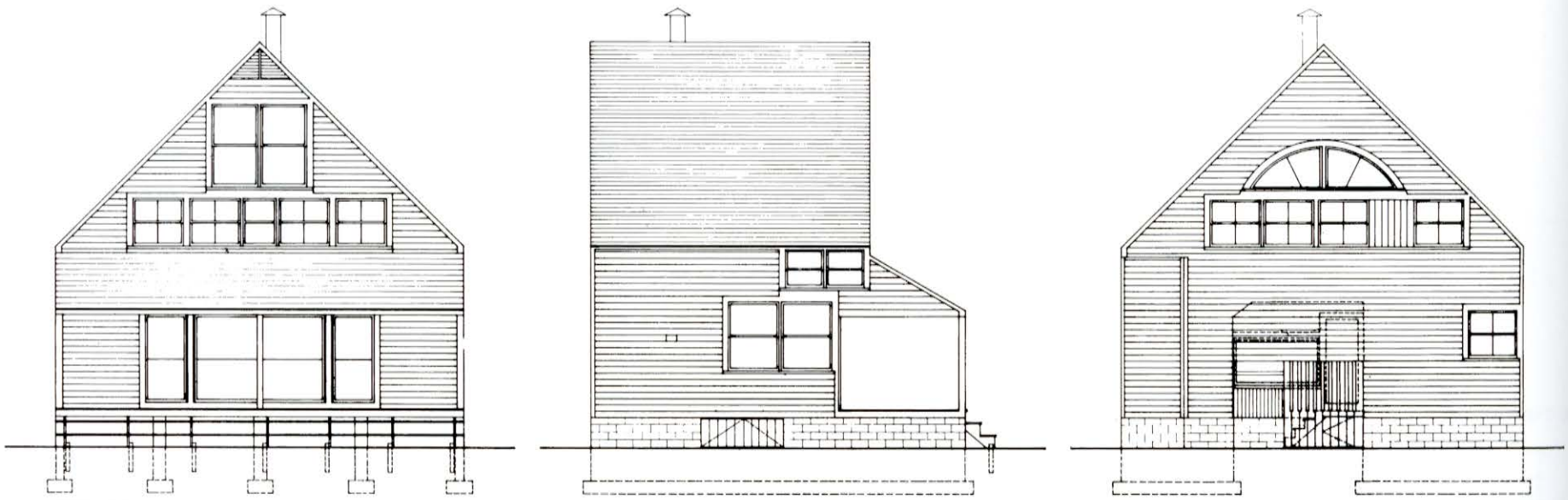
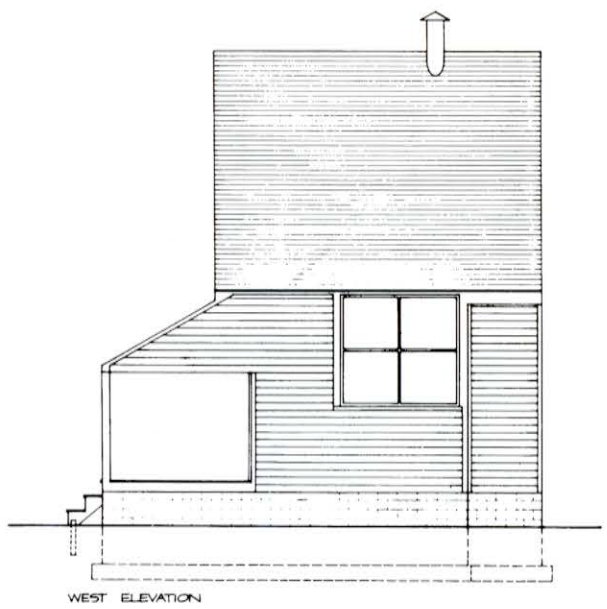
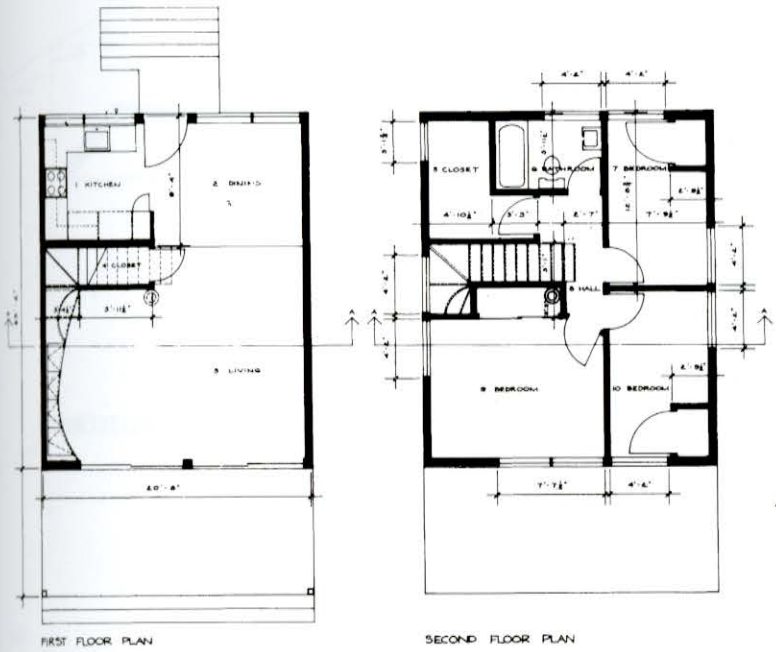




191. Trubeck house

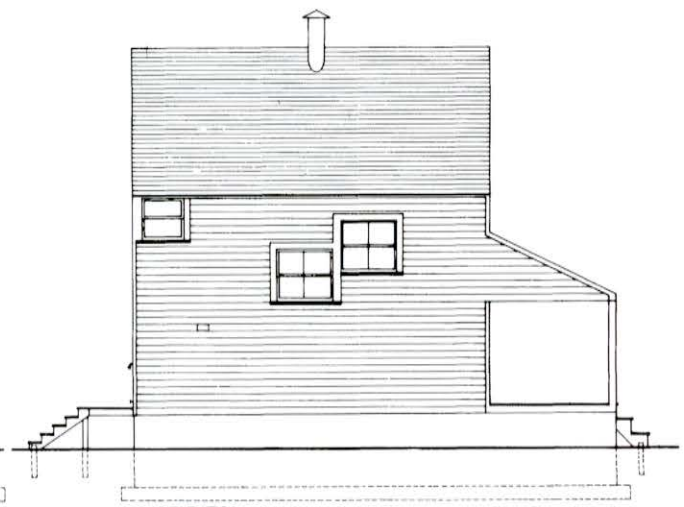
190



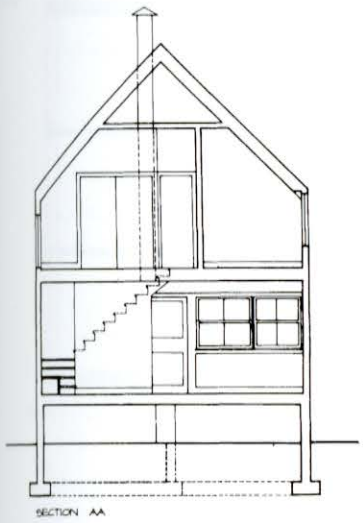
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

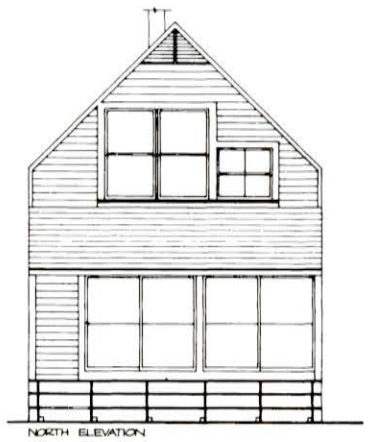
SOUTH ELEVATION



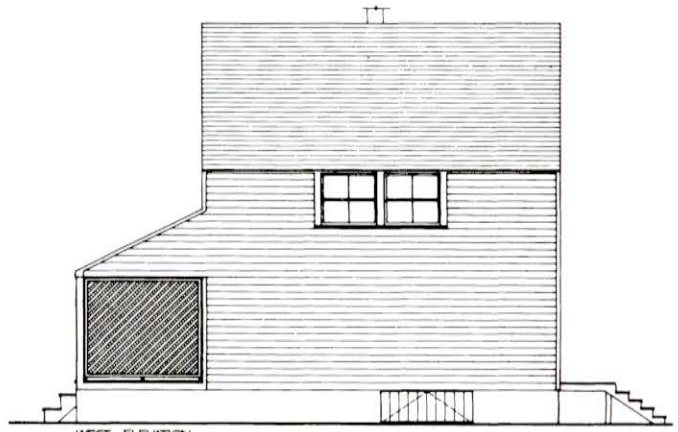
EAST ELEVATION



SECTION AA



NORTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION

192. Wislocki house

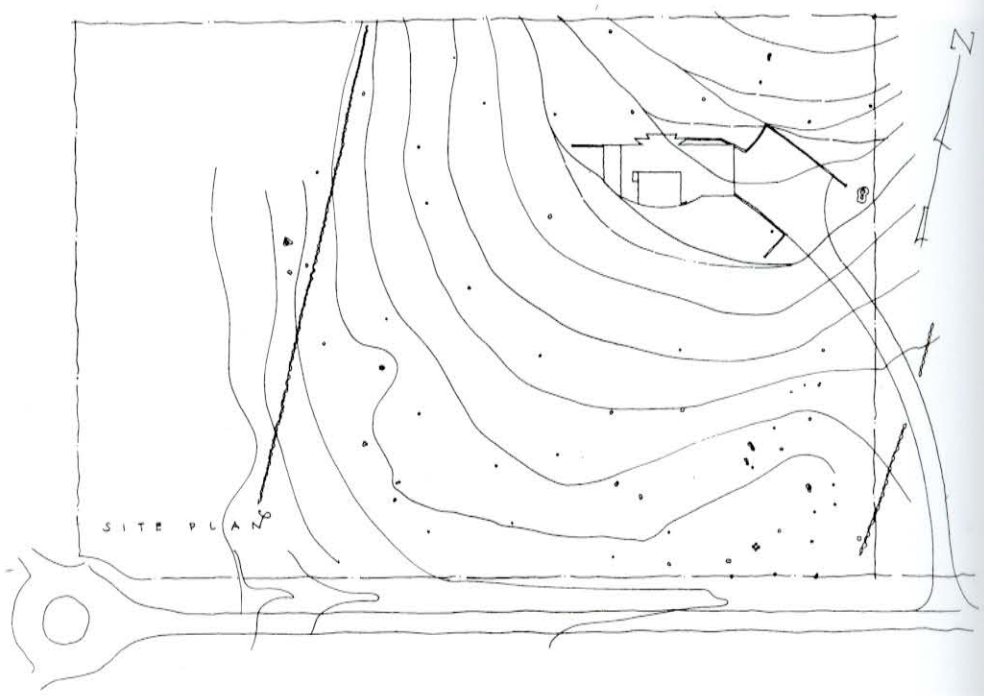
The Brant House,
Greenwich, Connecticut,
1971

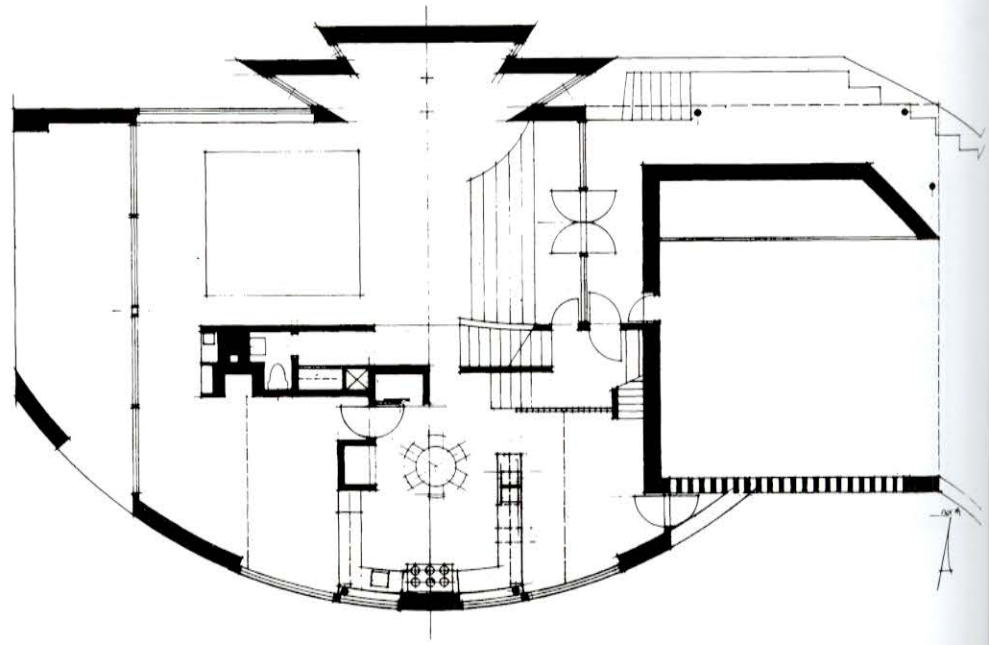
This is a house in the early stages of design for a young couple who plan to have a large family and who have a collection of Pop Art paintings and Art Deco objects. The site is 30 acres, not dramatic, but serenely beautiful, open and lightly wooded. A central asphalt driveway with streetlights, installed and dedicated by some intending subdivider, ends in a cul-de-sac edged by a fine stable and a small suburban ranch house, which the clients like for its own quality and which can house guests, older children, or staff. The immediate site for the new house is open and almost flat. We plan a green sign like the standard expressway sign indicating THE BRANT HOUSE where the driveway diverges from the central road.

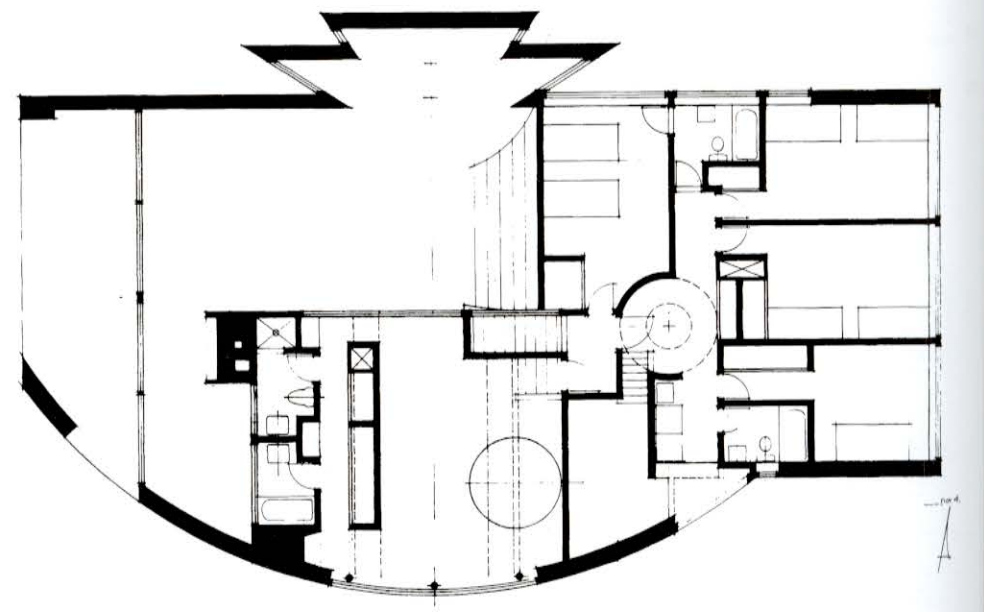
The approach to the house is from a sunken auto court that hides the parked cars from grade and gives access to the open basement, two-car garage, and to the stair entrance to the house. Both the garage and the entrance are under a deep, exposed steel beam spanning the width of the house. The wide stair entrance leads into a long two-story gallery facing a garden toward the north, with a series of rooms en suite on the other side facing south. Between the rooms and the gallery are servant spaces; on the second floor the equivalent spaces are bathrooms and closets. The kitchen is arranged to oversee the children's playroom on one side and the library on the other, where the family can eat informally.

The gallery serves for general circulation, upstairs and down, for occasional formal dining, and incidentally for some of the big paintings in the collection; but its main purpose is to create spaciousness inside. Its ceiling has an Art Deco-like cove-lighted section. The serpentine curve of its north wall makes space for potted plants and for the dining table at its center. Beyond is another layer of space — a Regency-like porch with thin Miesian columns in pairs.

The south elevation toward the road has a boring contrapuntal rhythm of big sliding doors below and square "attic" windows above. The corners are inverted on the second floor like those of a 1930s county courthouse. The doors open onto a plain, flat lawn. This facade resembles a plain Georgian country house (except there is no central motif), but the green-glazed brick in two shades makes a brazen Op Art Deco pattern. The other side of the house has no pattern but has a central motif and a more complex rhythm of openings with a bigger scale reflecting the high space behind.







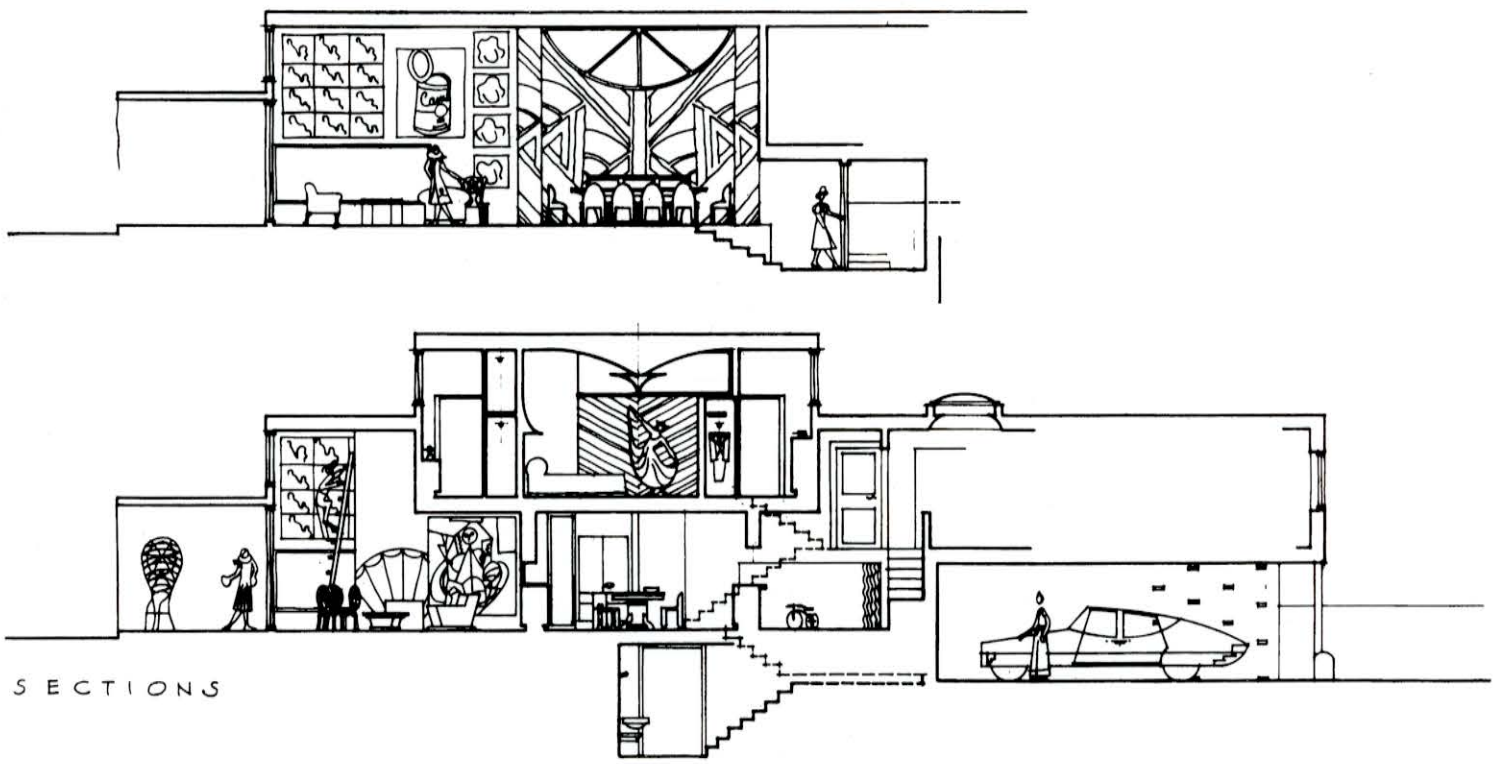
193. Site plan

194. First floor plan

195. Second floor plan

196

197



SECTIONS

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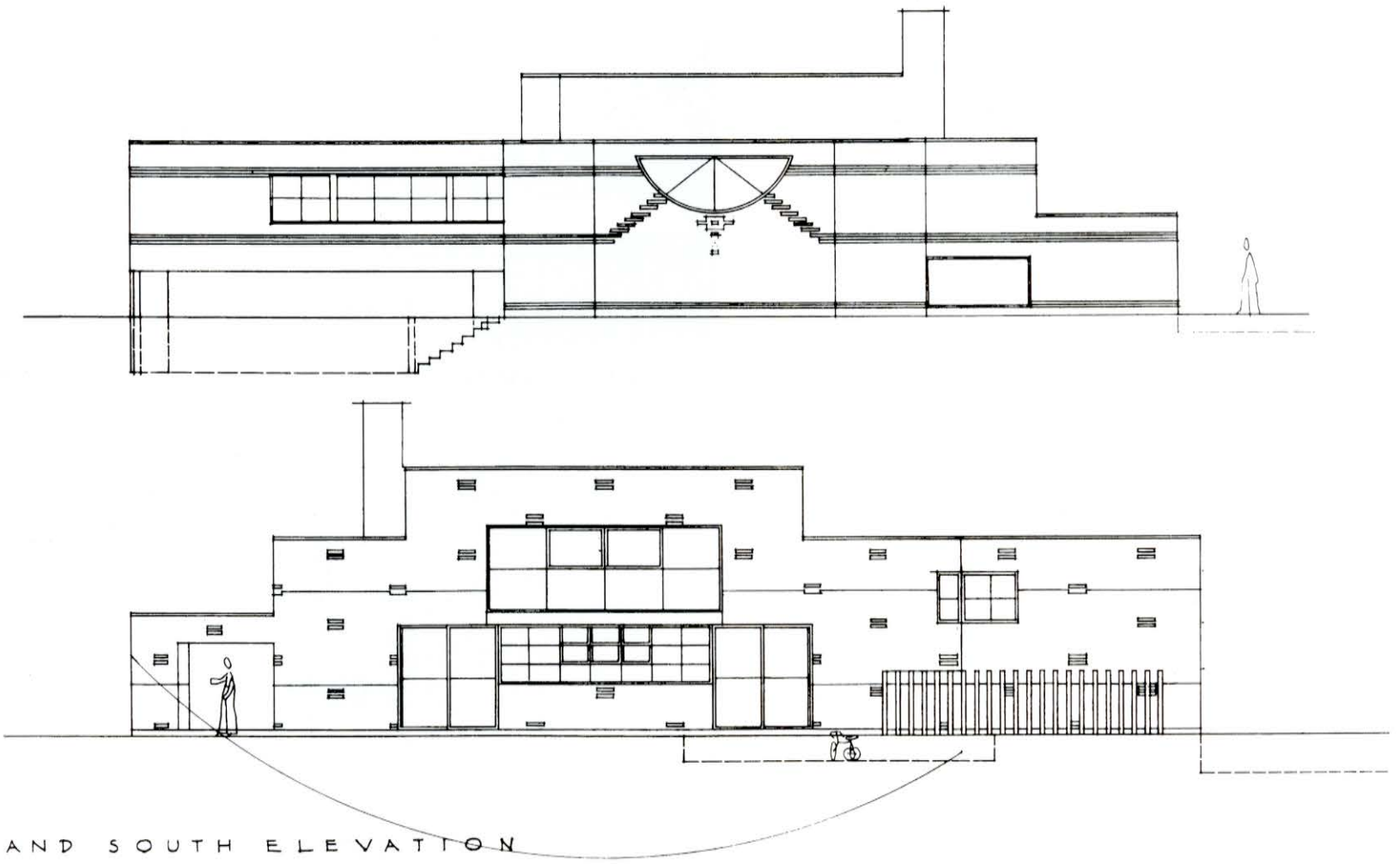

NORTH AND SOUTH ELEVATION

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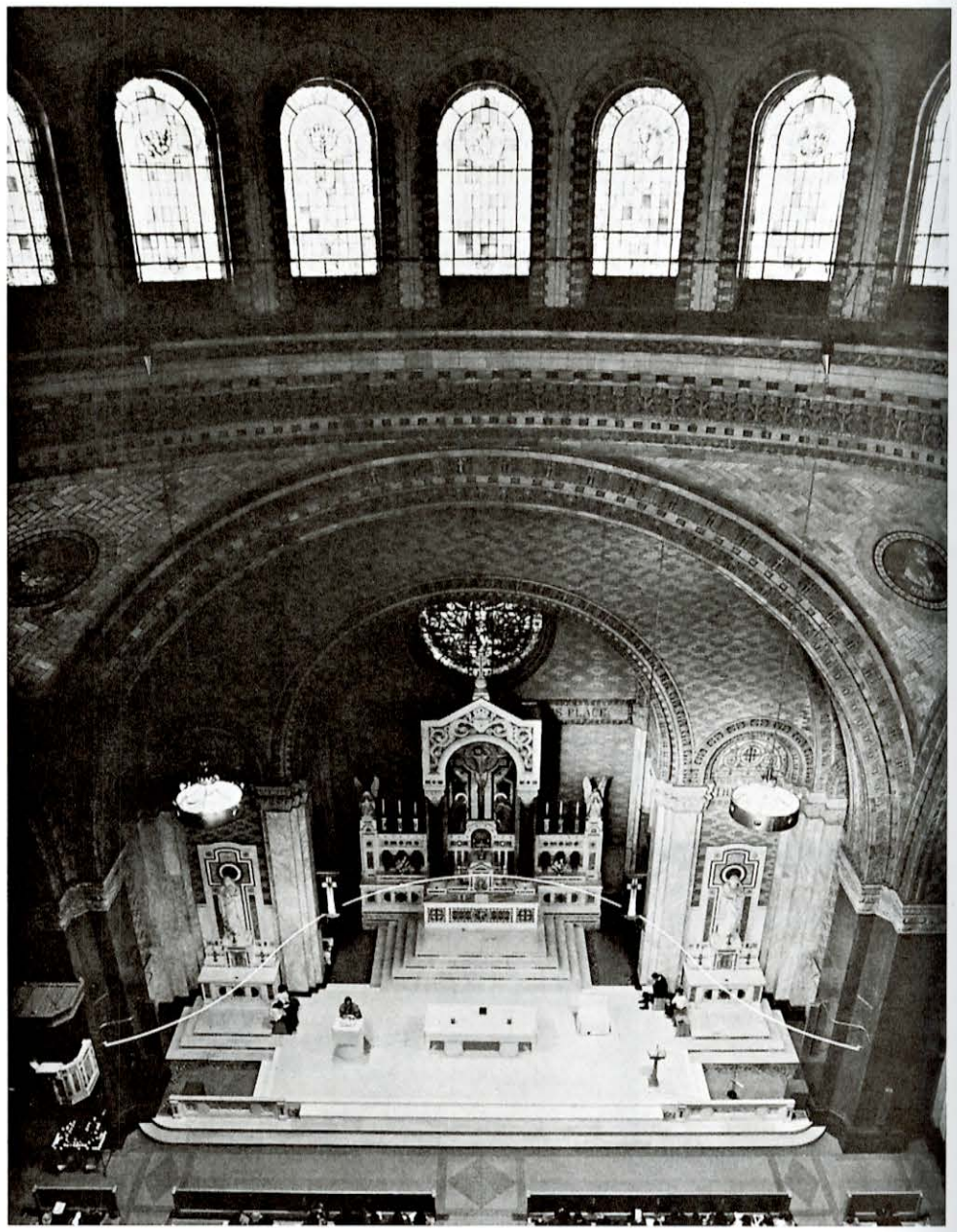
EAST AND WEST ELEVATIONS

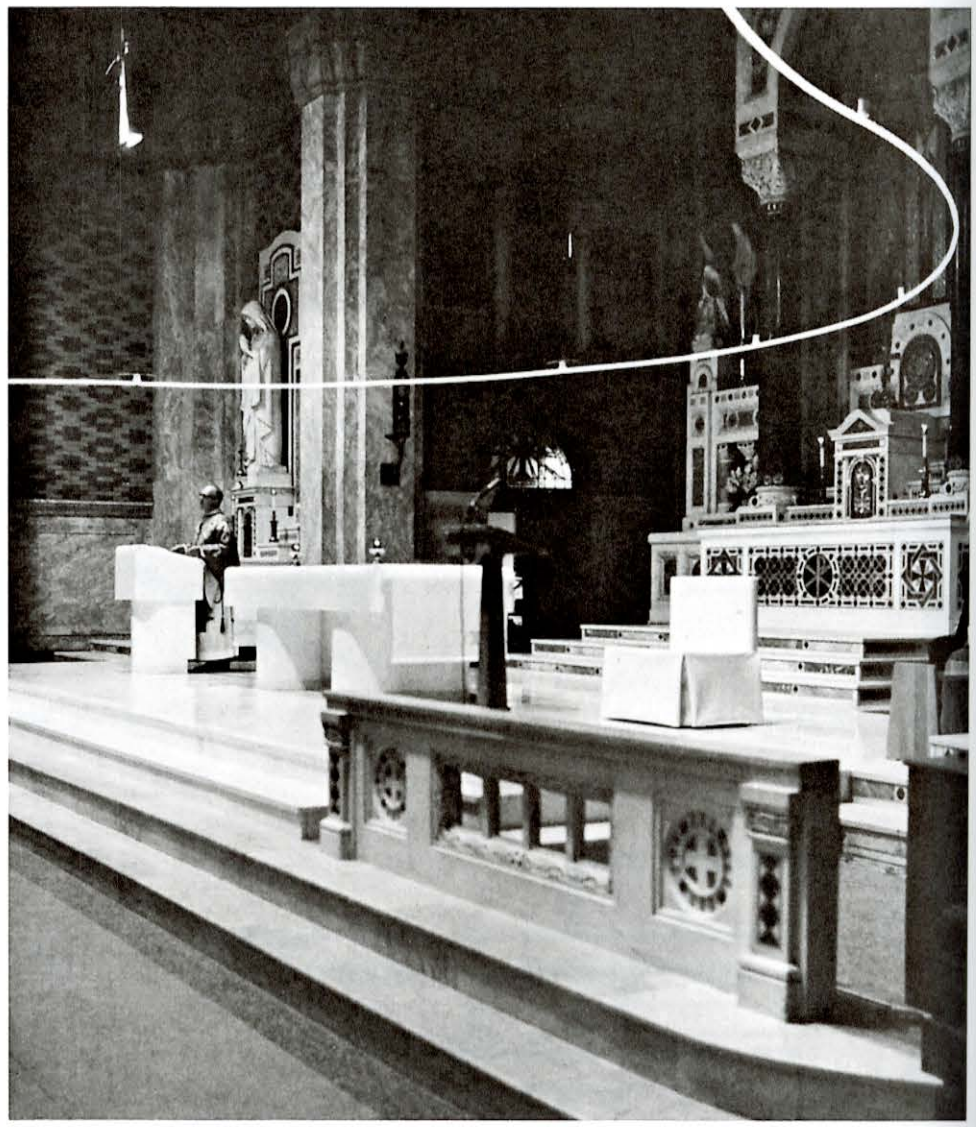
Renovation of
St. Francis de Sales Church,
Philadelphia, 1968
(with the assistance of
John Anderson)

The renovation of the sanctuary of Saint Francis de Sales to suit the new liturgy of the Catholic Church is a typical problem for churches with changing rituals since the ecumenical movement. At the same time, it was a particular problem — that of accommodating to a very large parish church in the Byzantine style of the 1900s whose yellow-glazed tile dome is a landmark in its once-fashionable neighborhood. The church inside is distinguished by gorgeous inlays of ceramic tiles and by Cosmati patterns in marble and gilded mosaics. Our general solution to the typical problem was to derive harmony through contrast rather than analogy and to add new elements rather than modify the existing fabric. Our particular solution used lights and plastic.

The primary requirement for the new ritual was to move the altar forward from its position against the back wal of the sanctuary so that the priest could stand behind it facing the parishioners. The new altar was to take the form of a table rather than the sarcophagus form of traditional altars In addition we were to design a lectern and a president's chair for the priest and remove the communion rail to decrease the separation betwee clergy and congregation.

Our first decision was to touch none of the existing architecture that we knew the parishioners loved. The interior with its inlaid ornament is significant historically, is of a high quality of design, and contains finely worked and expensive materials, almost unobtainable today. We left remnants of the elaborate communion rail at the sides; we kept the old altar with its geometric patterns of red, green, and white veined marble and its glittering mosaic pictures on the reredos. We juxtaposed a new alta contrasting not only in its symbolism but in its form (severe silhouette and plain whitish surfaces) and in its material (one-half-inch folded Plexiglas for structural strength — translucent milky white with a yellow lining We used modern materials and methods (the furniture was fabricatec by a plastic sign maker) because we could not and did not want to compete with the old. The curving folds of the table, however, suggest the traditional lacy altar cloth that falls over the ends of the altar; the shiny Plexiglas looks rich and luscious although different from the old altar (being off-white, it also suggests a patina of age analogous to its surroundings); and the scale of the new altar is big like the old.





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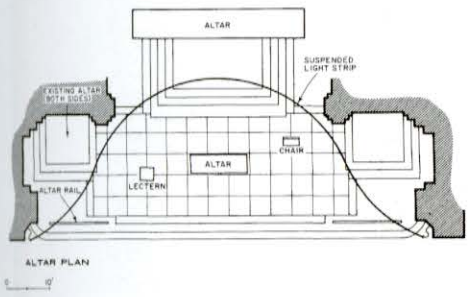
The lectern is like the altar, and its motival form has the same contrasting and analogous relation to its background. The president's chair is like the altar and lectern but soft like an Oldenburg telephone. It is upholstered in white vinyl fabric, another form of plastic, yet it resembles a traditional marble throne, vaguely Carolingian. A third plastic is the resilient vinyl floor tile on the extended dais that elevates the three new pieces of furniture.



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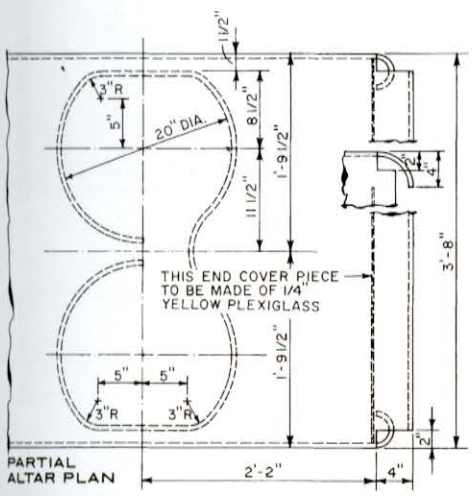

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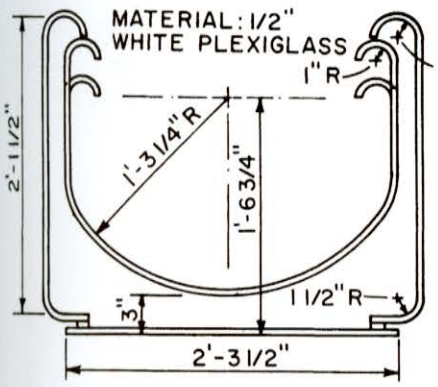
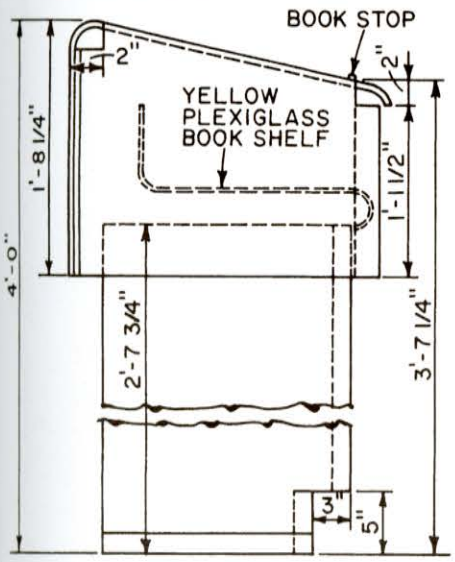


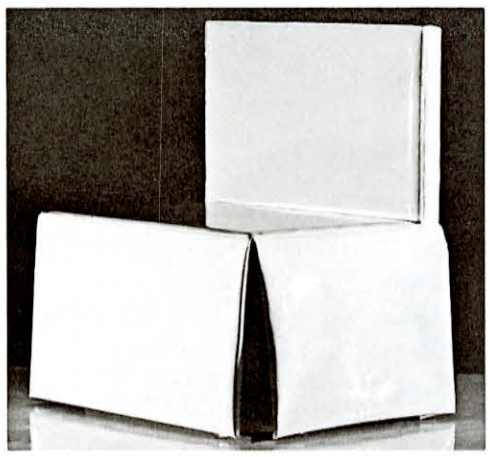
PLAN VIEW

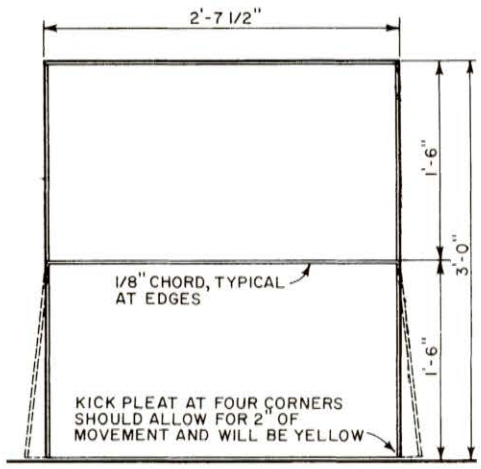


SIDE VIEW

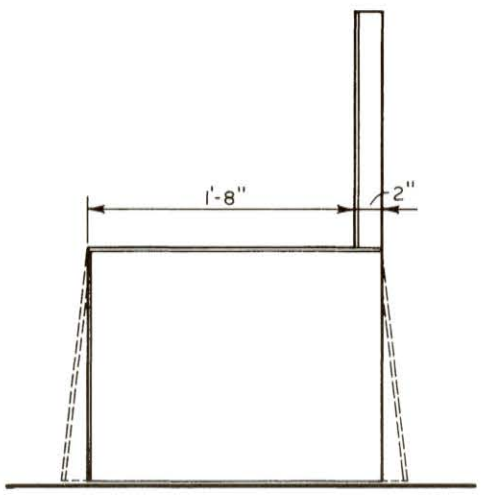
206. Lectern

The most important change was in the lighting. We redirected existing spotlights from the old to the new altar to put the old in shadow rather than to highlight the new. We maintained the same degree of illumination for nave and sanctuary in order to diminish contrast and separation between them. We also suspended a continuous line of cold cathode tubes in six-foot sections from invisible wires about eight feet above the floor; they formed a straight line in elevation, an undulation in plan, extending from one side of the sanctuary to the other. We dimmed this fixture so that it resembled a fragment of a halo — a hovering luminous line inflecting toward the congregation and uniting it. Like an editorial slash, it canceled the old but did not obliterate it, thereby reinforcing the layering of new over old. These complex layerings themselves became a symbol for inclusion — the inclusion of tradition and evolution, the love of old and new, and the value of the formal beauty of the old after its symbolic meaning is superseded.





CHAIR FRONT VIEW



SIDE VIEW

Unfortunately, a faction within this heterogeneous congregation, encouraged by some of the clergy, saw the tube only as a symbol for commercial architecture and not, as we did, as a sanctifying of the profane around us; more significantly, our light became a symbol for changes in the Church and parish that they were resisting. This faction succeeded in having it removed while the students who form the rest of the congregation were away for the summer. History repeats itself in West Philadelphia, where 10 years before our supergraphics were removed from Grands Restaurant.

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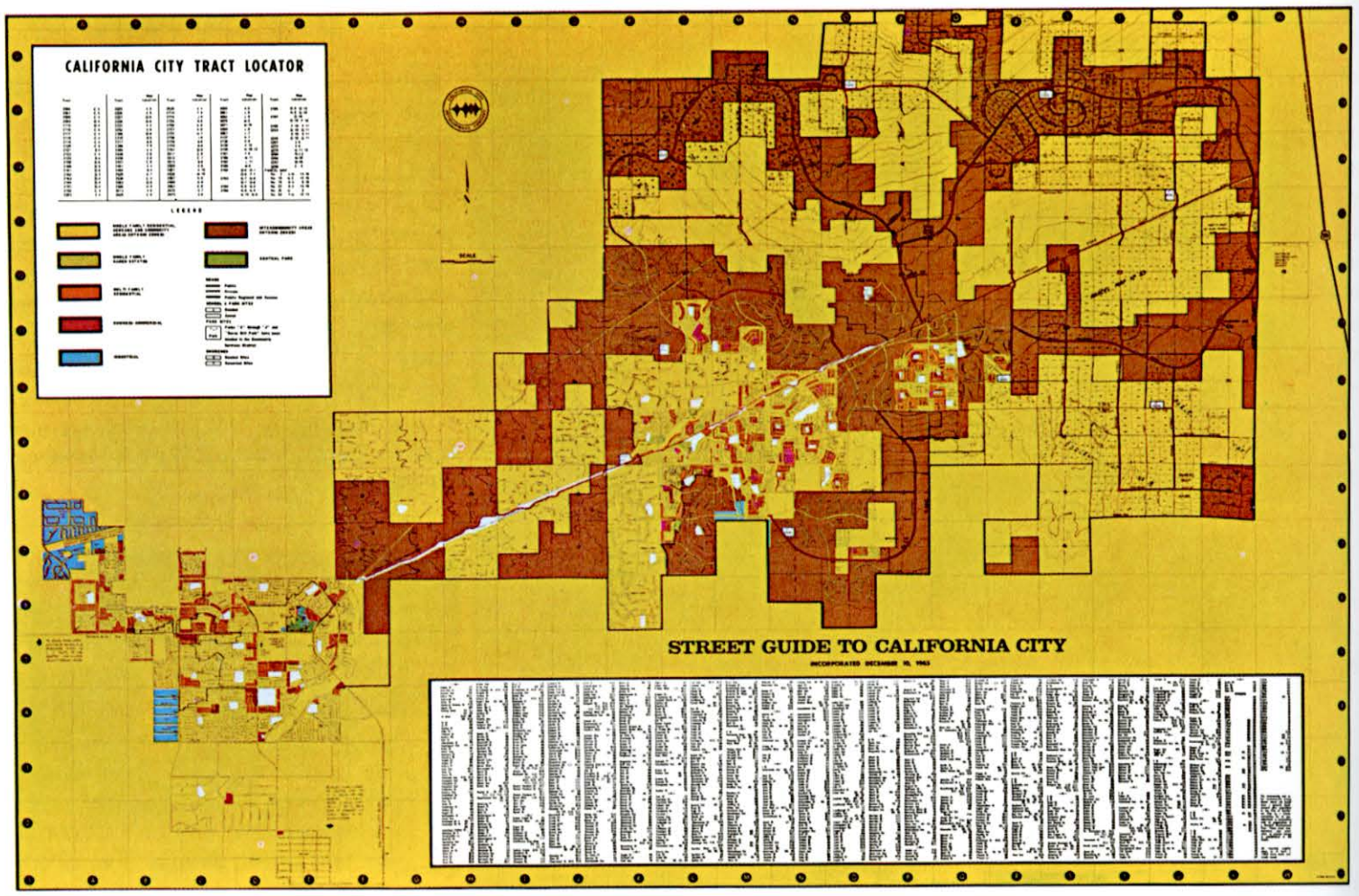
California City, 1970



This was another instance where the client introduced the program with the preface "If you can like Las Vegas...."

California City is 100,000 acres of subdivided land in the Mojave Desert, 100 miles north and east of Los Angeles. It has a shopping center, two churches, two motels, a fire station, an airport, and two recreation areas, one with a horse ranch and the other with a man-made lake, and a present population of about 2,000 people, many of them living in mobile homes. Each owner acquires with his property a MERBISC card entitling him to use the recreation facilities at Central Park. MERBISC stands for Most Extraordinary Recreation Bargain In Southern California. In the years of its existence, the city's developers have subdivided and sold most of its extensive acreage, mainly to nonresidents hoping to settle there in the future or to investors who see it as the next area for large-scale development in Southern California. Thus, although it has a plan and although developer houses are available (and at a considerably lower cost than equivalent houses in Southern California's more famous new cities), California City developers are engaged primarily in urban land manufacture and selling.

A change of ownership of the parent company, Great Western Cities, Inc., brought a change in policy toward land manufacture and city building and brought us in, with instructions to renovate the general plan in line with the new policies and to develop further some of its recreational and public aspects. The work that follows is at the early project stage.

The General Plan

(partner in charge, Denise Scott Brown, with the assistance of Giovanni Cosco)

Since California City already had a general plan and most of its area had been subdivided and the road system built, general planning meant reassessing the situation in the light of new trends and policies and of what had already been built and suggesting new possibilities and approaches, which, for us, lay particularly in the directions of ecology and image making.

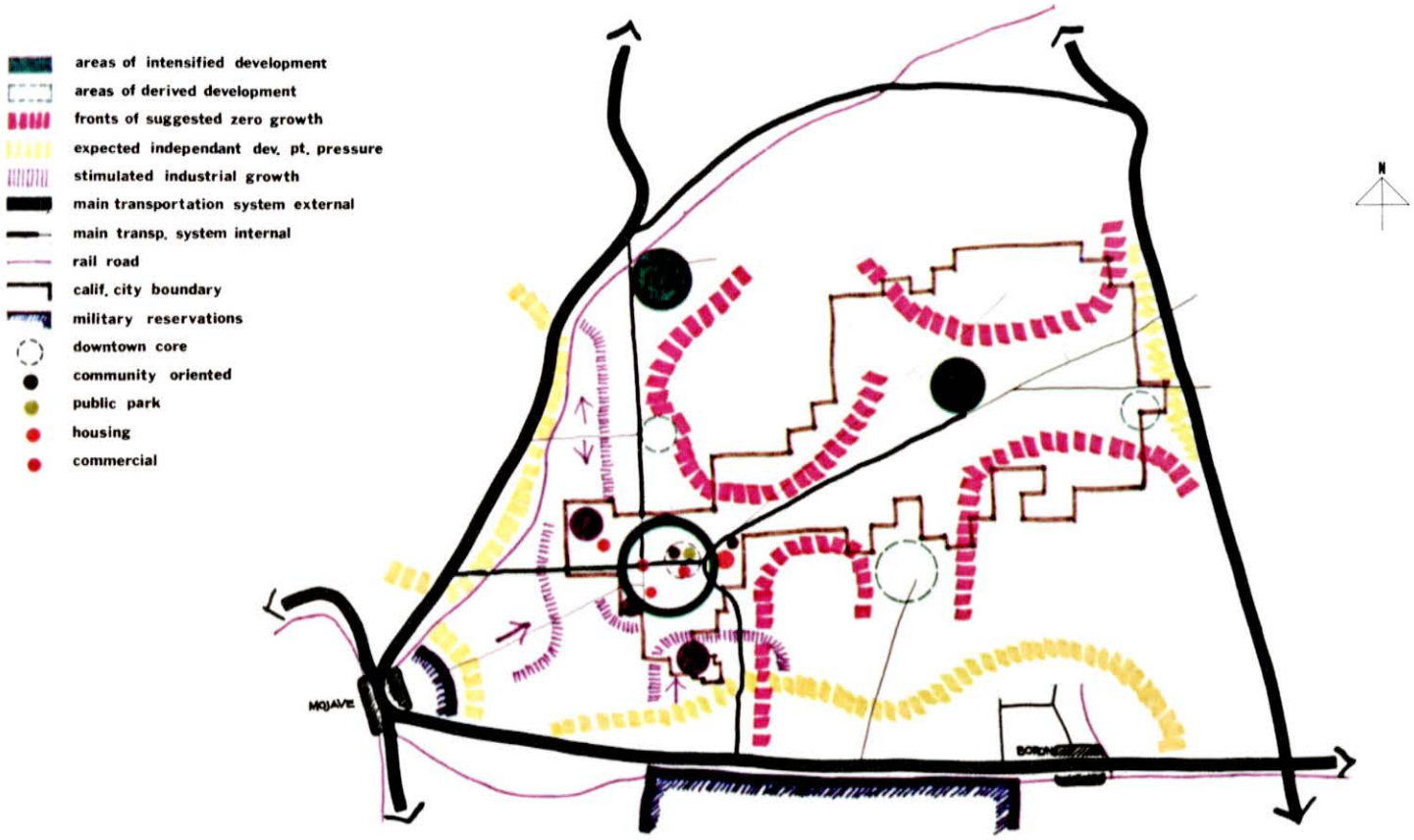
The existing general plan was one of neighborhood units with "greenbelts" in between (actually, 2½- to 20-acre ranching estates). An expressway network, of a capacity suitable to the city's future as an adjunct to Los Angeles, linked areas within the city and linked the city to the region. In turn, the network was linked to a hierarchy of local roads and to Twenty Mule Team Parkway, a macadamized and lighted 12-mile stretch of highway that joins the downtown to Galileo Hill, one of the city's few eminences, where the horse ranch and a desert park are planned. Twenty Mule Team Parkway parallels a historical dirt track over which mule teams transported borax.

On the ground there are no expressways yet. The street system consists of the existing Randsburg-Mojave Road, which bisects the city, and Twenty Mule Team Parkway, which forks from it, and the local network, bladed, according to California law, to give access to every lot sold. This is already an enormous street overcapacity for the existing population. Our first reaction to the road system was that it seemed to lead nowhere. Working with it, we came to realize it was well designed to sell lots and to direct traffic through the city center where the stores and the sales office are. The shape, too, of California City seemed unusual. It is like a radial sector of a city, with the center at one extremity. This allows unincorporated land of high potential value to exist on main routes into the city, near the downtown area.

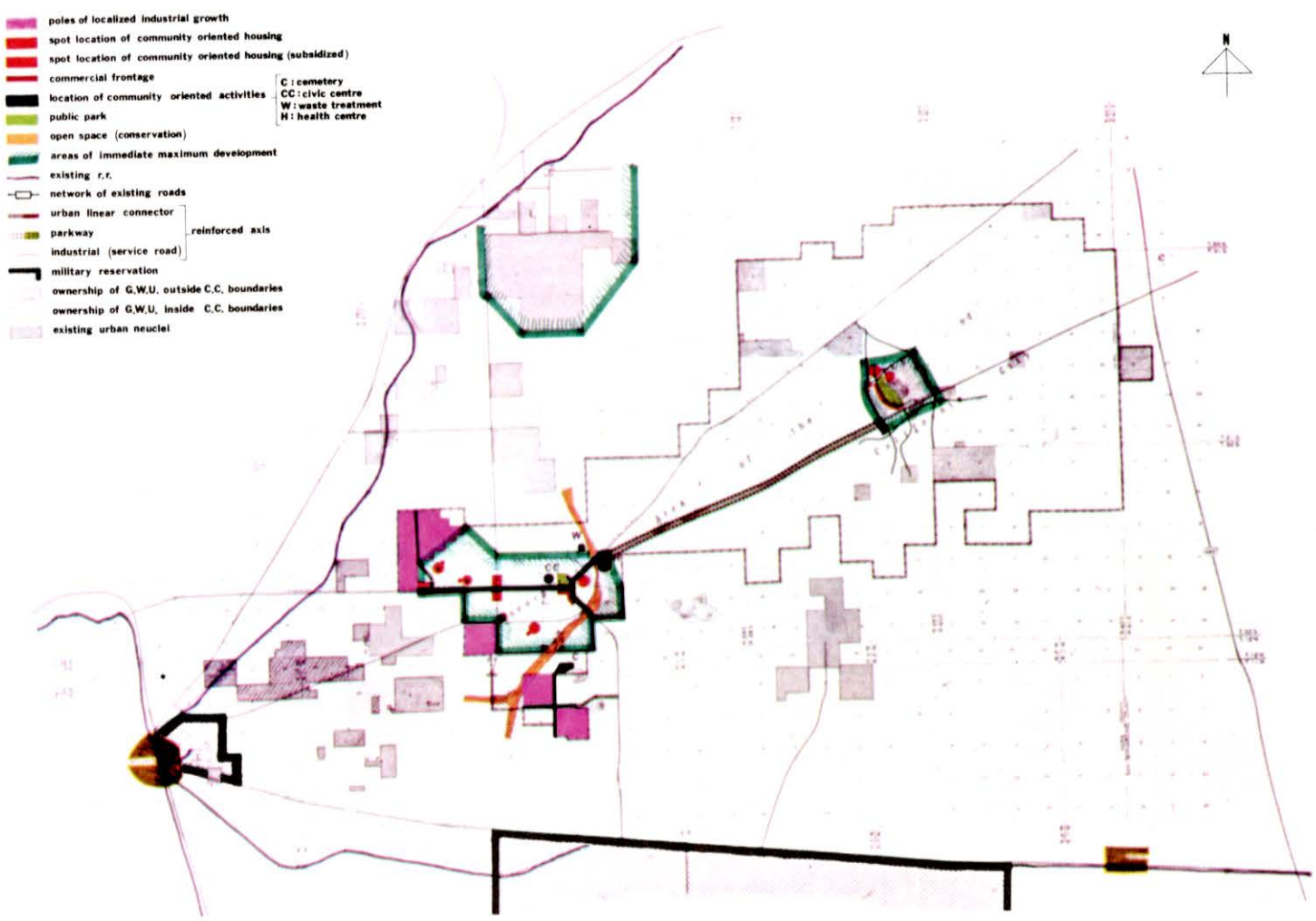
We suggested a staged development strategy based more on the existing road system than on the hypothetical expressways. We recommended locations for several new facilities: a small shopping strip, a medical office, transportation terminal, and cemetery. This type of general planning advice is an ongoing function needed in the day-to-day growth of the city that eventually will be incorporated into its own planning agency.

We felt that, for the moment, the development corporation had sufficient market information from its own sales force and did not need an economic consultant and that the movement system was not yet in need of more specific professional help. However, we strongly recommended an ecological study and advised against an overabundant use of grass in the attempt to produce a New England landscape in the desert, because an increase in humidity could make the high temperatures unbearable.

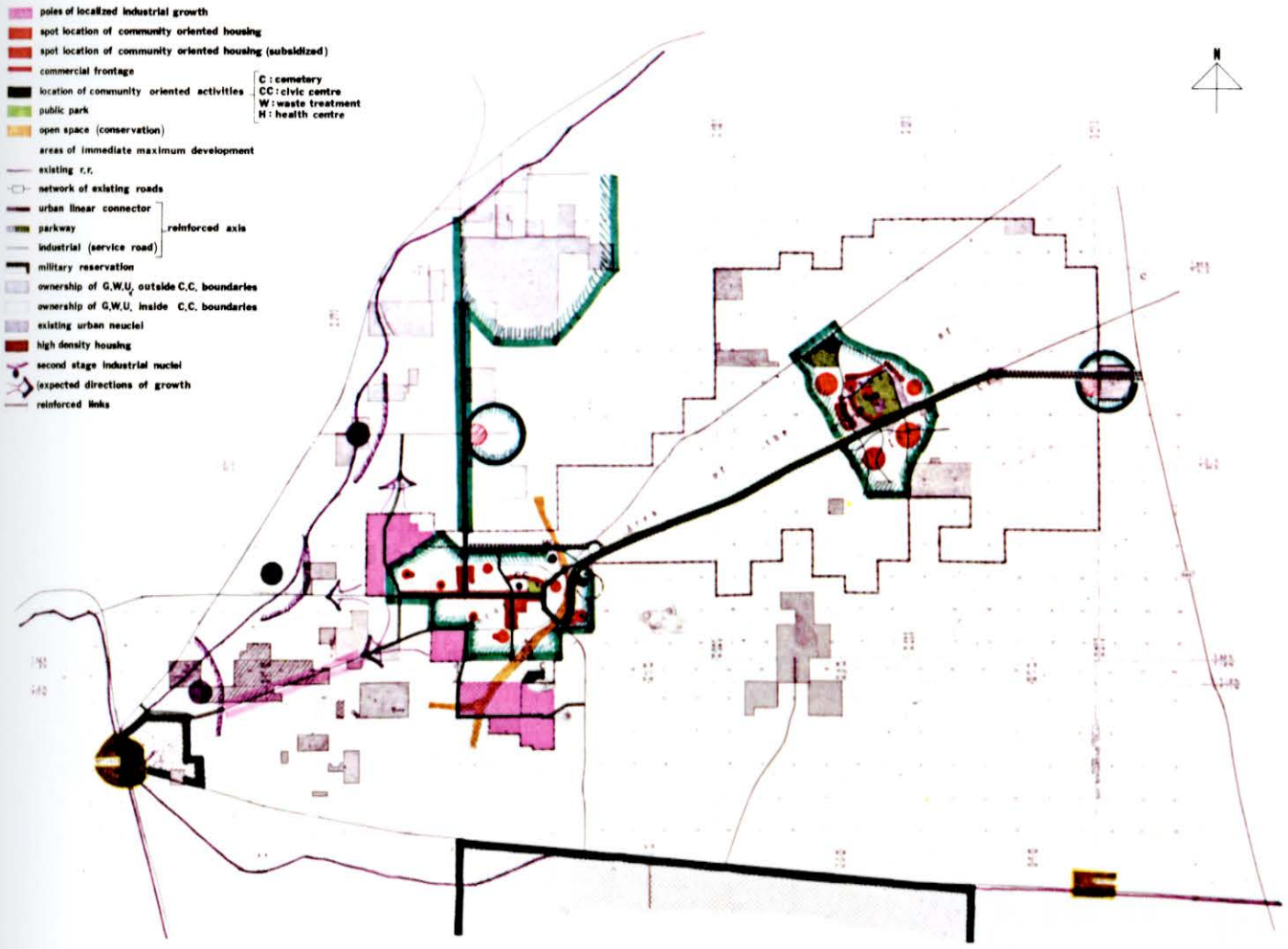
Our philosophy has been to try to let what "wants to" happen happen in this city, that is, to work with, rather than against, the social and economic forces, if at all possible. For example, it is useless to recommend to the developer to hold open vast areas of land for a long-range plan to put high-rise apartments at the city center. Some land will be held for a civic and a commercial center. But suburban subdivisions border these centers, and, as in traditional cities, these will be redeveloped for high-rise buildings when the demand is right. California City is not a "high design" city; it is closer to the Levittown model (with significant differences for its later date). It is open ended and idiosyncratic. Its desert location appeals to the pioneer in people, and its citizens, if judged by their houses and landscaping, are individualists and not the smart young urbanites who flock to the well-manicured new towns. Planned as it is, California City can afford to keep house prices down. The peculiar genius loci that it has achieved through this mixture of constraints and policies is one that we admire and would not wish to change.

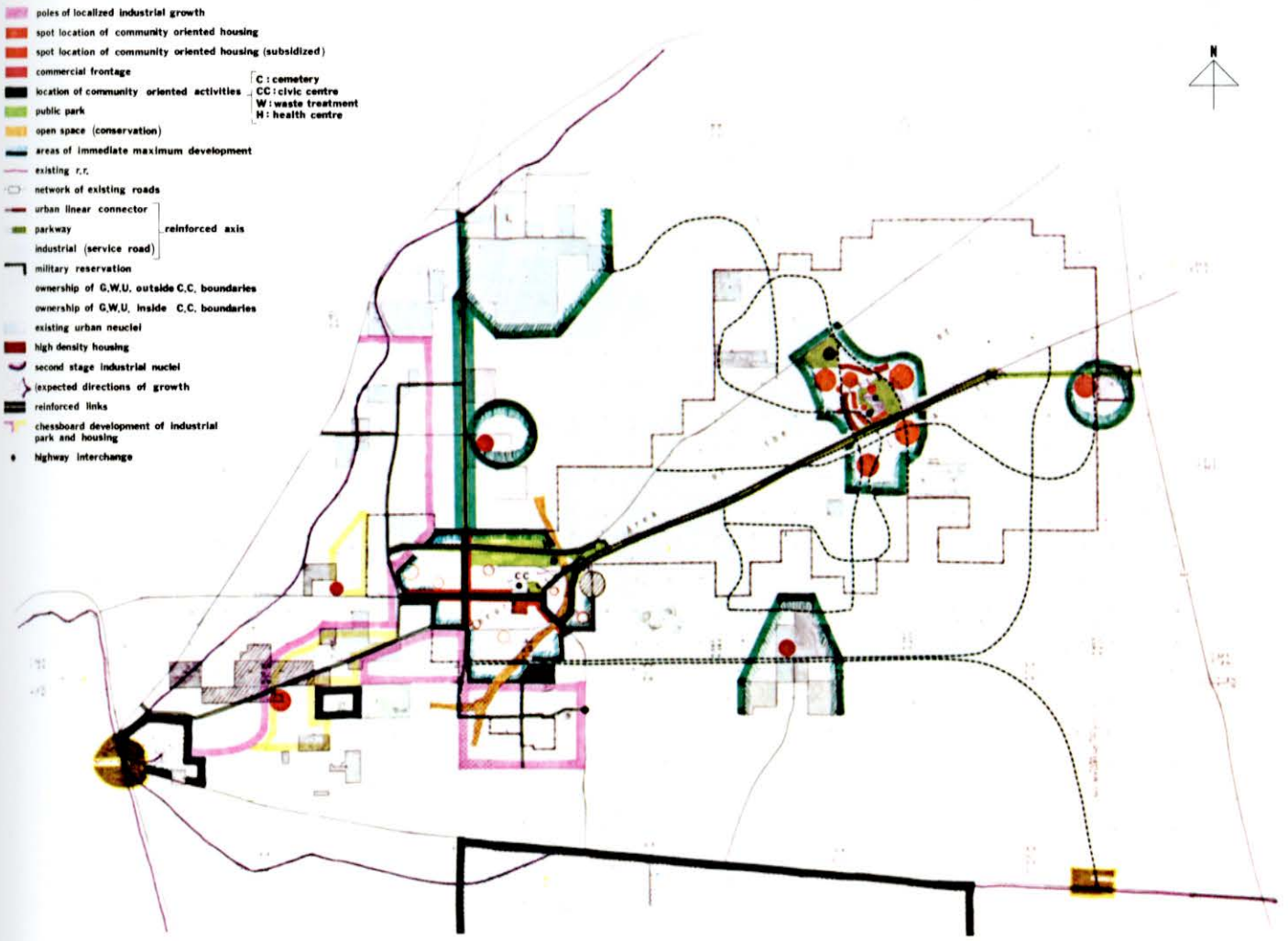


215. Strategy of development



216. Phasing of development I





217. Phasing of development 2

218. Phasing of development 3

Galileo Hill
(partner in charge, Denise Scott Brown, with the assistance of James Greifendorf)

California City is not a retirement community; nevertheless, sun and fun is the name of new urbanism in the Southwest for everyone. The recreational facilities are a major focus for the theme-image-role-playing motif that we discerned as one of the chief attractions of Las Vegas and that sells houses around patios from Fort Lauderdale to San Diego. Galileo Hill is California City's second major recreational facility, 1,300 acres of desert, 12 miles from the center. We recommended several themes: on its eastern slopes a desert park, more than 900 acres of wilderness. This may, one day, be the only desert left in the city, depending on how many people can be persuaded not to reproduce their familiar green landscapes around them. In the park are a horse ranch, camping grounds, and horse trails. We recommended adding a mining-town theme park, a desert museum, and a desert ecology and gardening demonstration center. On the other side of the hill, out of sight of the desert park, we proposed two motels, a golf course, and clubhouse, lined with suburban housing, and tennis courts similarly lined. Town-house groups would cluster at strategic points and half-acre to five-acre "ranchettes" would be linked by horse trails to the desert park and by automobile to the clubhouses.

219. Galileo Hill Park

Twenty Mule Team Parkway
(with the assistance of
Paul Hirshorn and
Denise Scott Brown)

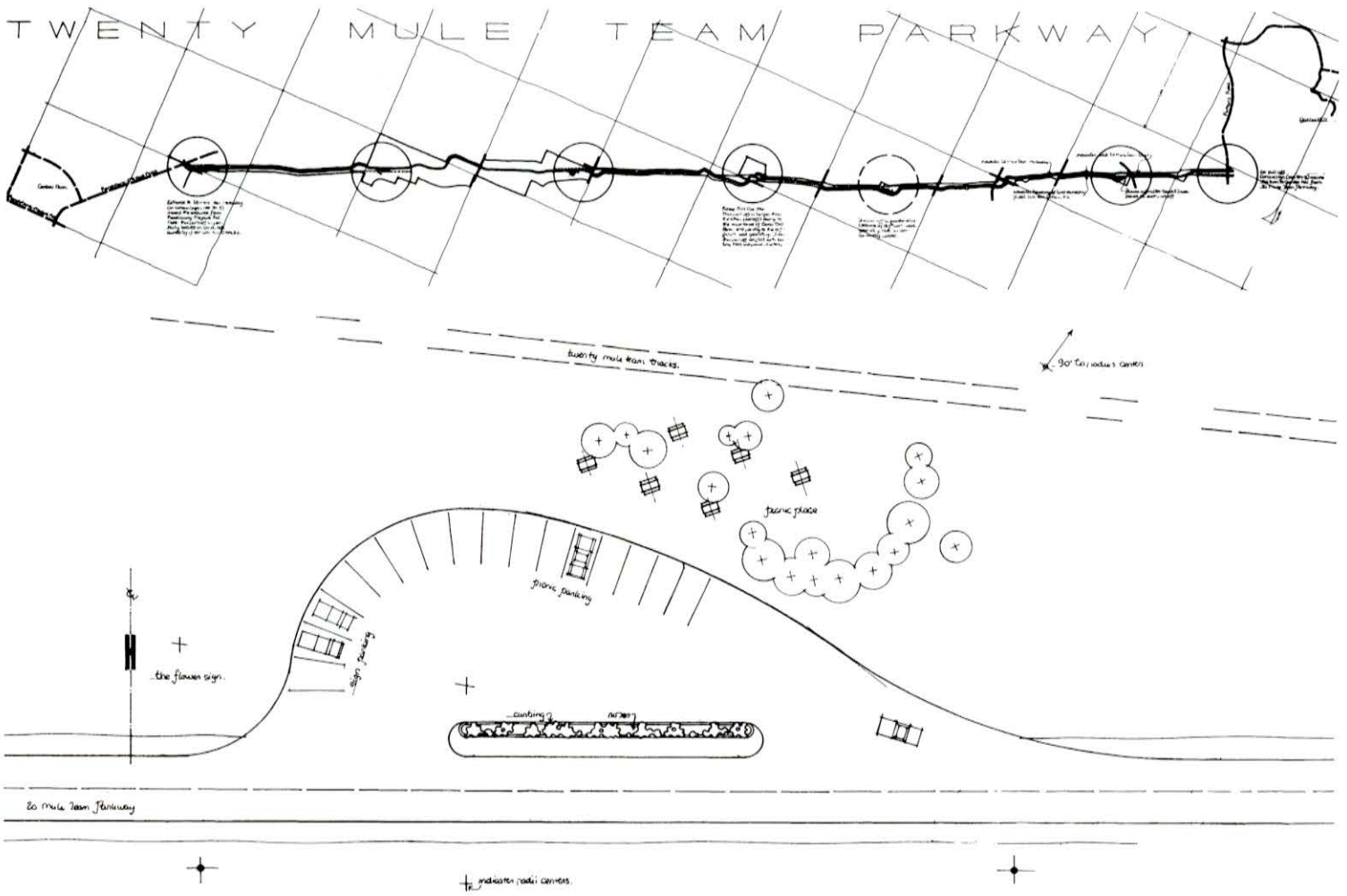
Although they are built by private enterprise, American new cities must invest more than most other cities in their public infrastructure, because this is what the prospective buyer sees first, both in the developer's brochures and when he is going around with the salesman. No new city can afford the "private affluence and public squalor," which the rest of the United States seems to prefer in the urban environment. California City therefore has more than its size alone warrants in recreation areas, and a larger commercial center and two miles of roses down the median strip of the main road into town, all subsidized by the developer. Signs and billboards too are a large part of the public environment. Signs advertise a new development: APPLEWOOD ESTATES. Deborah Sussman has designed a set of miniature billboards at the entrance to the shopping center, saying CALIFORNIA CITY, WATCH US GROW. A big, illustrated sign on the site of the intended civic center designed by Konrad Wachsman has almost come to serve as a substitute for that center. Many of the signs were designed with verve and talent, but they were one of the reasons why we were hired by the new owner — to help turn signs into reality.

However, a new set of perfectly legitimate signs was needed for Twenty Mule Team Parkway. Here, too, an interesting piece of "public sector" was already in existence. The original owner, when the city was hardly more than a gleam in his eye, had installed along the length of this road, an urban arterial highway lighting system, 12 miles of light poles in the desert starting nowhere and going nowhere. The night the lights went on, people from miles around massed at the entrance and promenaded the parkway in their cars. The line of lights can be seen at night for hundreds of miles.

Light poles alone are not, however, strong enough to hold the attention of the customer as he is driven by the salesman out to Galileo Hill. During that time the desert may loom large and hostile to the potential buyer. (According to the salesmen, most people fear the desert; theirs is the voice that cries "grass, plant more grass.") Hence we were asked to design stopping places along the parkway that would act as cue stops for the salesmen and revivers for the customers. Each place was to have a sign alluding to some aspect of the city that the salesman could describe: its history, fauna, or amenities; and several should have picnic tables, shelters, shade trees, and parking space.

Six large signposts were called for that would stand out and attract attention across the desert. We were back with Las Vegas, where each sign must have a high reader, visible from a great distance, with an attractive silhouette, and a low reader for detailed information, which we decided should be visible to a customer sitting in the back of the salesman's automobile. We knew too that to hold people's attention these signs must look "beautiful" and therefore must not resemble billboards since people do not find billboards beautiful. Their shape and content must be "uncommercial." We chose desert flowers as our theme, partly because flowers are regarded as beautiful (they are also uncontroversial), partly to reinforce our own aim to push desert gardening to save the ecology. We felt also that these flowers should be painted realistically and nonabstractly to make them beautiful to the eyes of their beholders. We produced an alternate range of signs closer to conventional billboards and therefore possibly cheaper, where we maintained a desert flower theme but based our designs on commercially available greetings and sympathy cards.

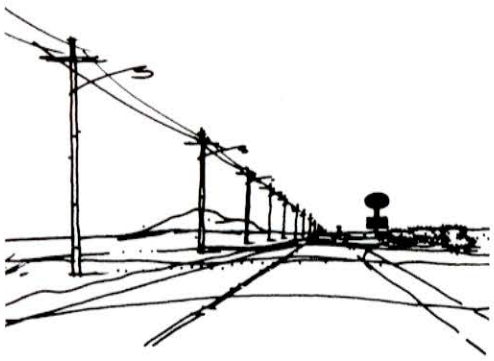
220-226. Signs for Twenty Mule Team Parkway

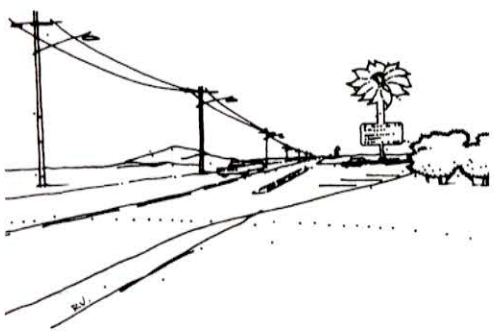


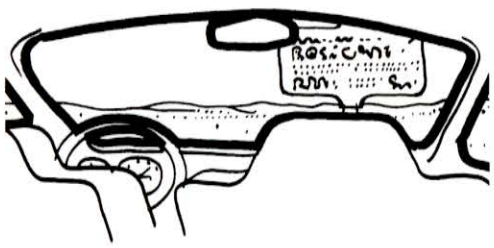
220. Location plan

221. Site plan

We tried to choose locations for the stopping places where the orginal twenty-mule-team track was visible from the new road so that, like the intertwining Via Appia Antica and Via Appia Nuova, the history of the former could be demonstrated in passing on the latter. The Via Appia used iconography on the tombs and monuments of its great men to mark history; California City iconography will mark the activities of Borax Bill and other real or legendary heroes.







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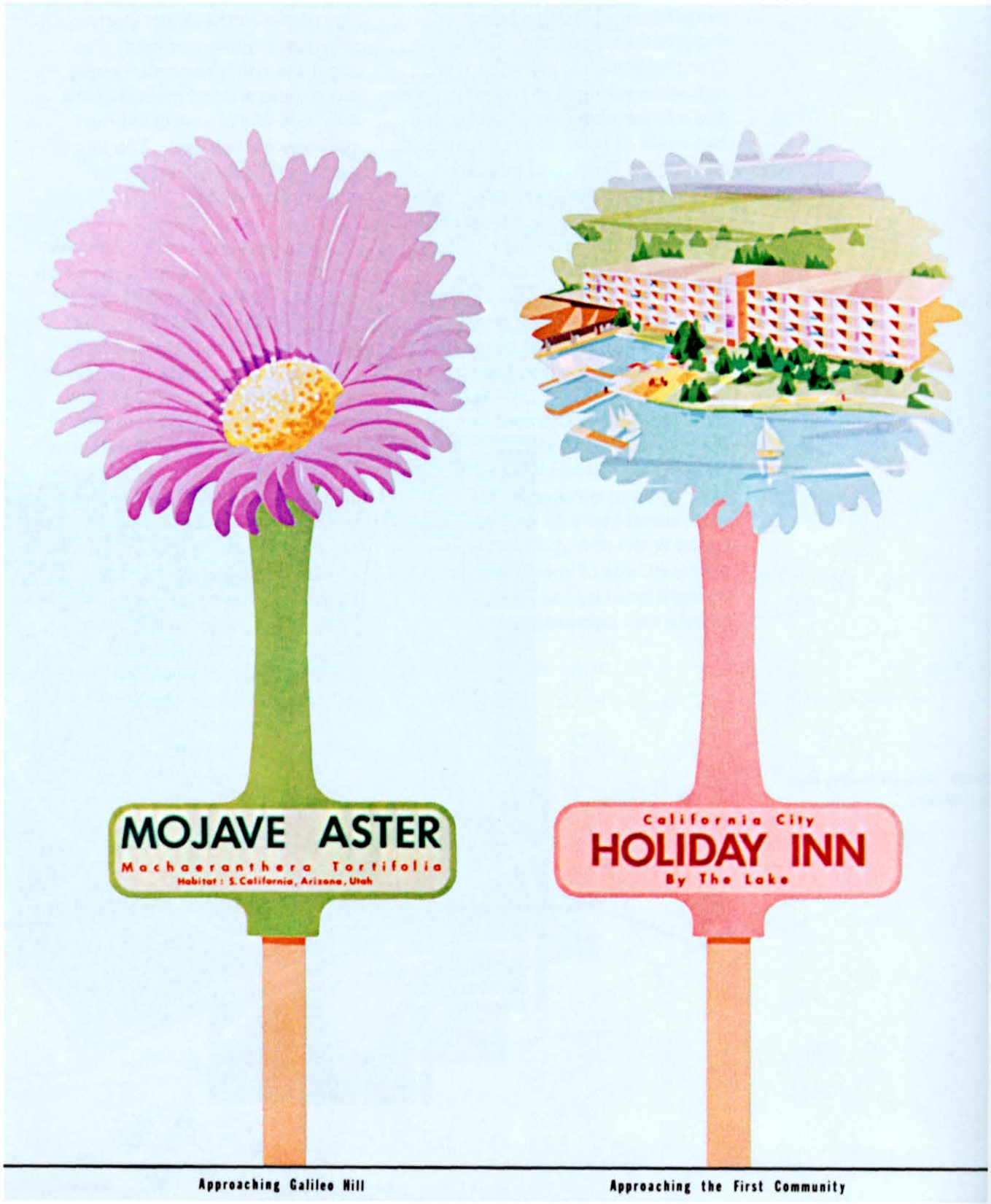

Approaching Galileo Hill

Approaching the First Community

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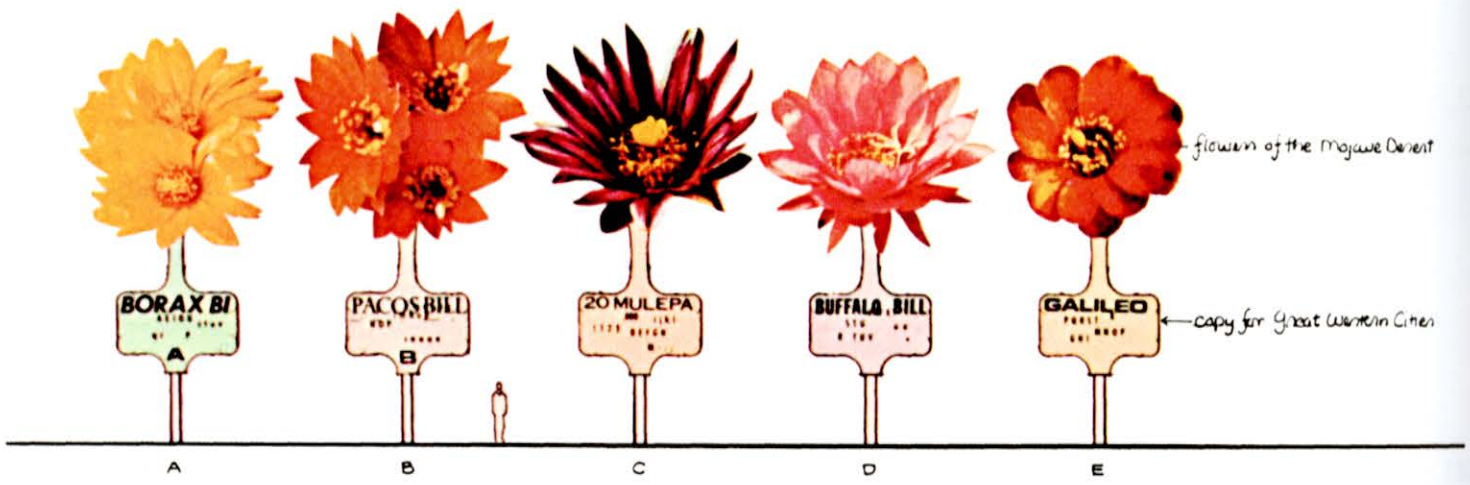


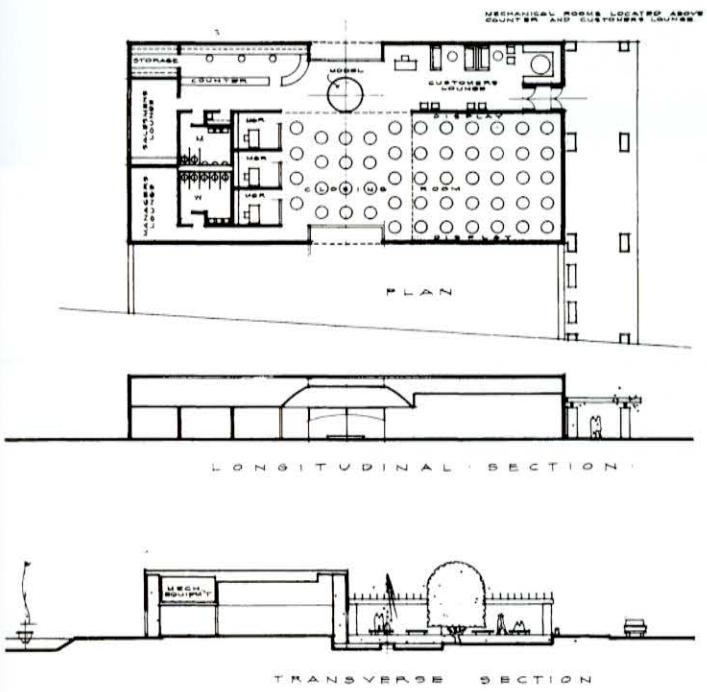
Sales Office for Great Western United Corporation
(with the assistance of W. G. Clark)

This is the headquarters for the sales department of the land development company, a place for receiving customers and closing sales. It sits on the lake in Central Park with a parking lot in front of it and the Holiday Inn beside it. On the other side is a group of garden apartments.

The low budget dictated a simple frame building with a flat roof. The program called for a building with few windows in order to create a controlled interior atmosphere and to focus the attention of customers onto the promotional displays. The sales manager wanted a dignified pavilion in a pretty garden with an approach like that of the Bel Air Hotel.

We designed a box with a single window on each main facade, recessed and partly covered with lattice for shade from the desert sun. There are small windows on the south elevation for staff lounges, and the main entrance is on the north. The big central windows, which are not an entrance, give symmetry and symbolic dignity and increase the scale of the relatively small building seen from the parking lot and from across the lake. The apple-green lattice that extends over the entire building reinforces this effect, differentiating the sales office from the hetrogeneous buildings around it. The lattice is espaliered with blossoming vines.

The flower garden is an oasis, sunken to protect the flowers from the desert winds and to make their geometric patterns visible to people entering along the pergola at the side. In the center is a fountain in a pool whose shape reflects the arched opening in the trellis above.



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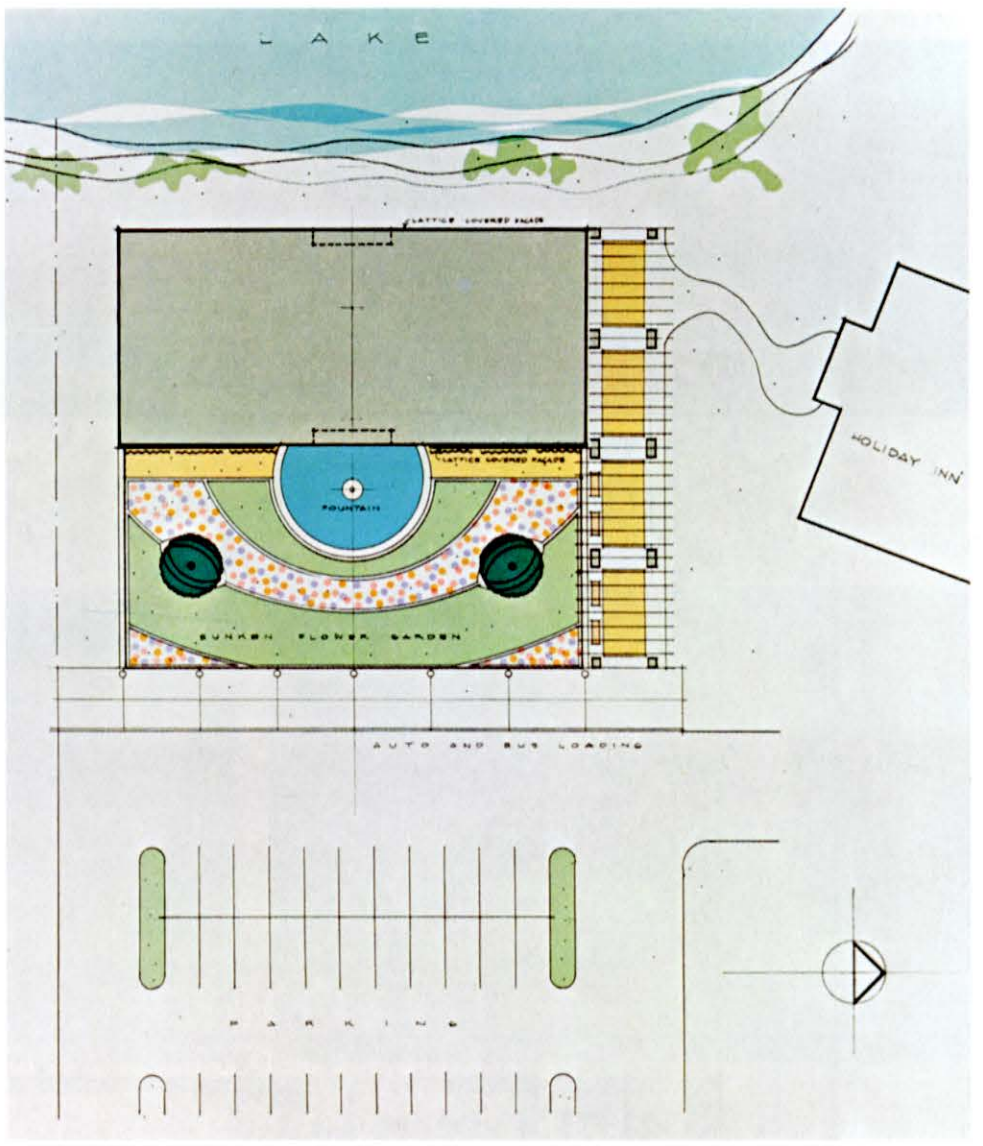
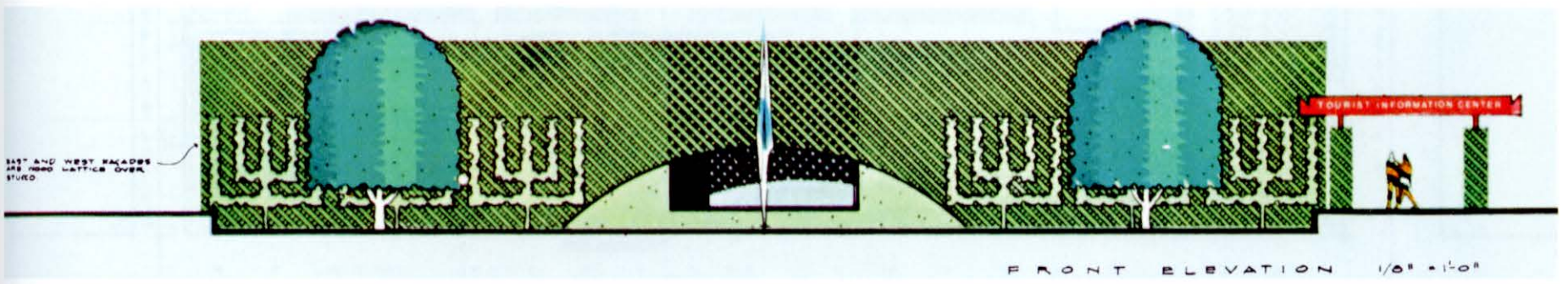


228. Site plan



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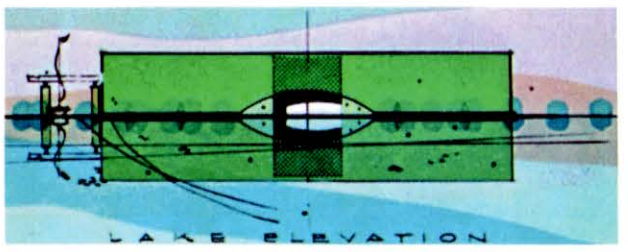

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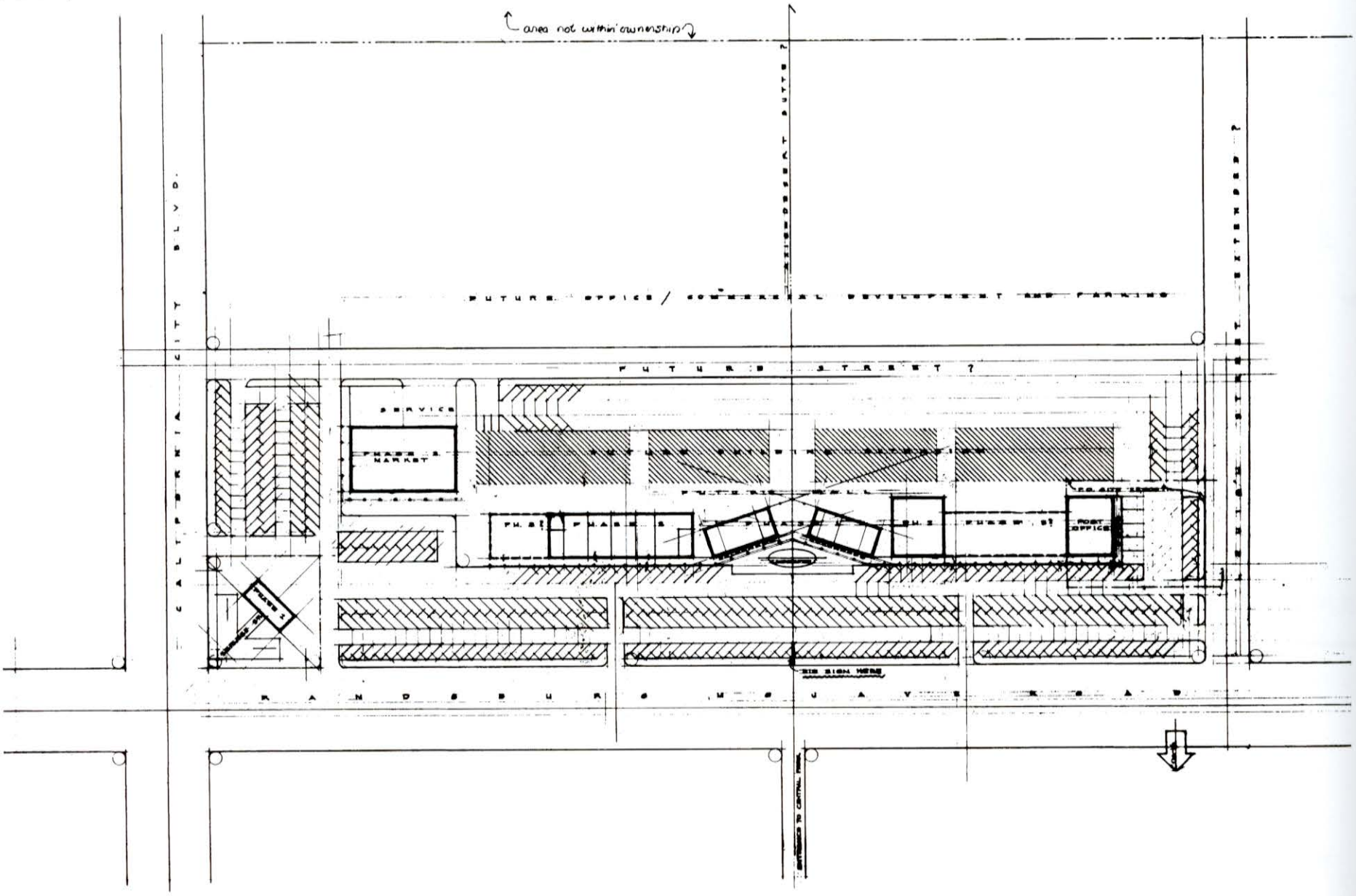
MERBISC Mart
(with the assistance of
W. G. Clark)

This is a little commercial row along the Randsburg-Mojave Road capable of expanding into a neighborhood shopping center and later complementing a future nearby regional shopping center. It is a standard small-scale strip, constructed according to local conventions with parking in front and service behind. At the next stage, however, the shops will front both ways to face a mall behind. There is a loggia for shade and at the end a post office with special loading facilities. Surmounting the loggia is a high lattice backing to support the store signs. Individuality and variety will be encouraged in these signs within the frame of their consistent background. What is shown on the lattice is a prediction rather than a design.

An exception in the design of this little row of shops is its slit at the middle and the slight canting of its two parts in plan. The slit is opposite the entrance to the MERBISC Recreational Center across the road to suggest an axis that focuses on two buttes in the distance and to promote thereby, at this early stage of development, at least, a relationship between architecture and landscape difficult to achieve in this land of vast space and meager building. The slight angles of the strip in plan, along with an elliptical mound for flowers in the center, suggest enclosure within this form and promote a sense of place. Surmounting this embryonic piazza is a big billboard, also paradoxically suggesting a center in a strip, which is "beautiful" and symbolically sentimental to the inhabitants of the desert — a large copy of a rural scene called "New England Summer" surmounted by letters spelling MERBISC MART. We hope an appreciation of this picture of an Eastern landscape will replace the inclination of citizens to reproduce it in their yards. We hope it will be the chef d'oeuvre of the local lady who paints scenes on garage doors. A second big sign, freestanding and perpendicular to the road, communicates to the drivers from a distance.

232. Site plan



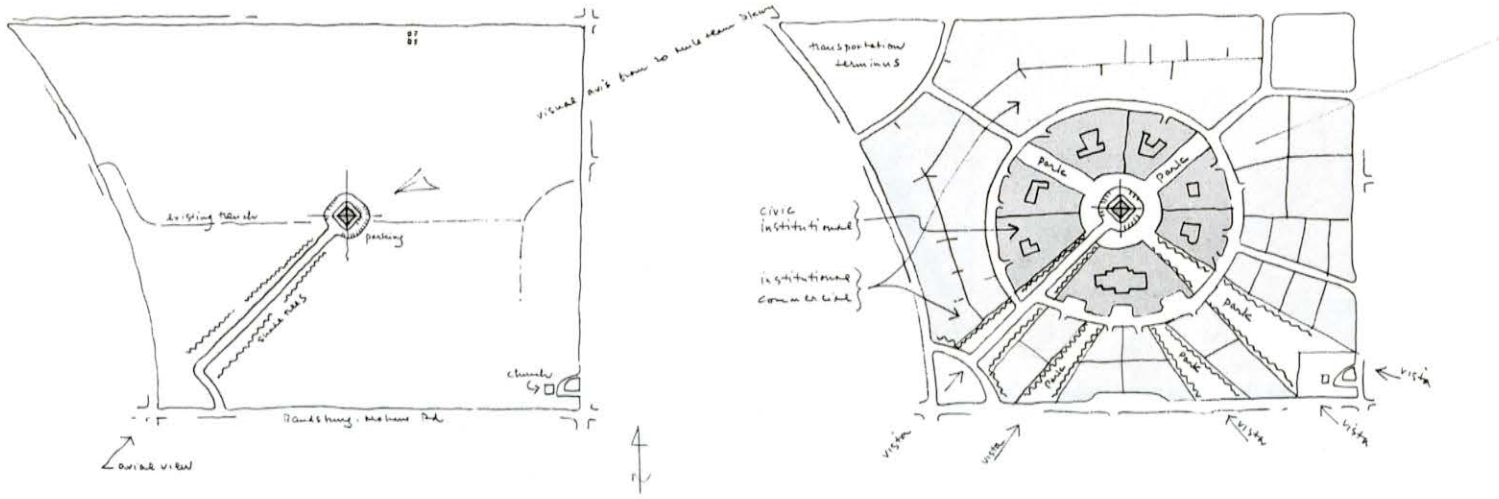
The Civic Center Area
(with the assistance of Denise Scott Brown)

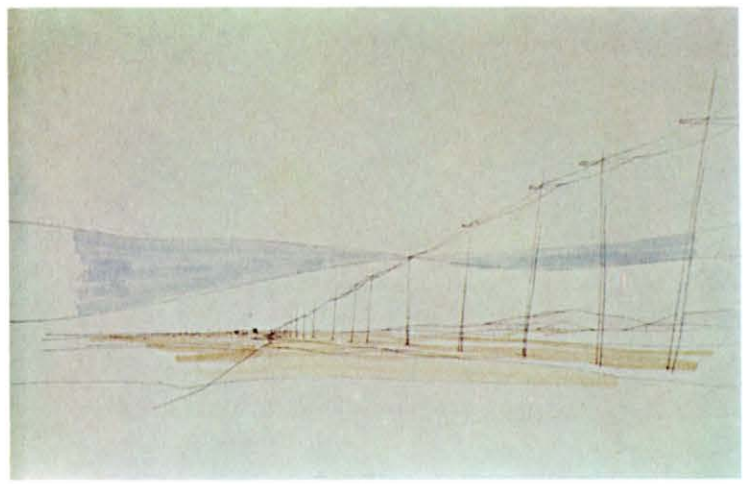
A civic center has existed for ten years in California City in the form of a big picture on a billboard on its intended site. We were asked by the new owners to make a design study for the area and for another civic building with a different program to house some city offices and the developer's administrative headquarters and to sit symbolically in the center of the site.

The civic center site is a superblock a quarter of a mile square across the Randsburg-Mojave Road from the proposed regional shopping center and adjacent to Central Park. In our study the central site is ringed by a road off which will gradually develop on both sides civic and institutional buildings. An outer ring of buildings will be approached from the main roads bordering the superblock. These will be of mixed commercial and institutional use, and some buildings will absorb the expanding civic program so that the central building can remain as a static symbol.

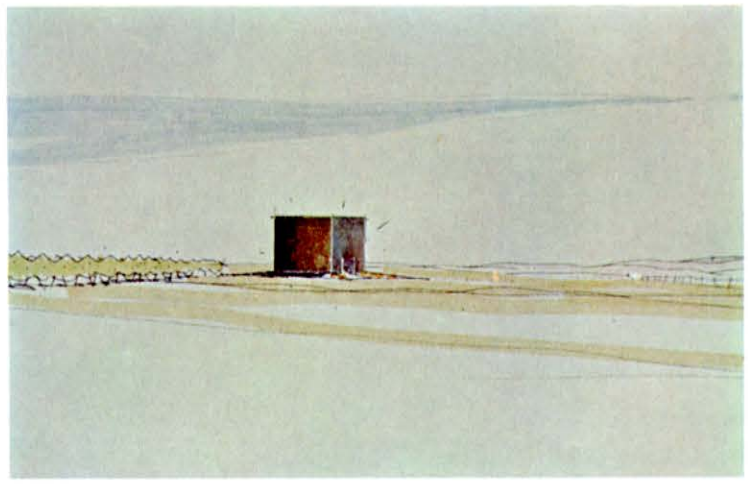
The somewhat Beaux Arts symmetry and concentricity of the plan of this block are reinforced by the radial axial approach to its center and the radial vistas toward this center from the Randsburg-Mojave Road. These radials become a series of diagonals to the main road, to enhance the visibility of the central building from a moving car on this road. (Vistas perpendicular to the road would be hard to see from a fast-moving car.) The site of the central building is on the axis of the Twenty Mule Team Parkway and is the focal point of twelve miles of essentially straight, downward sloping road.

233. Site plan





234. View from Twenty Mule Team Parkway



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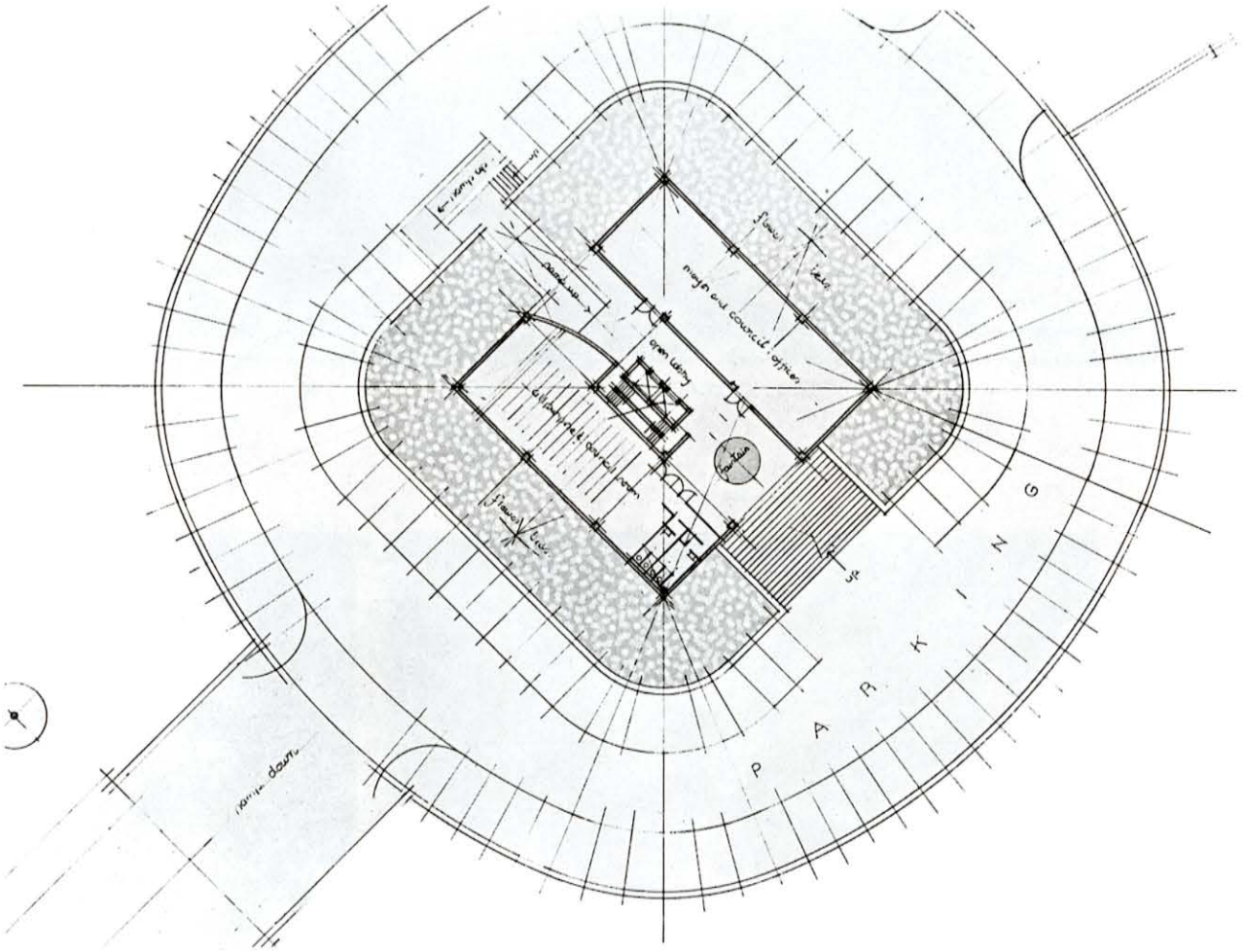
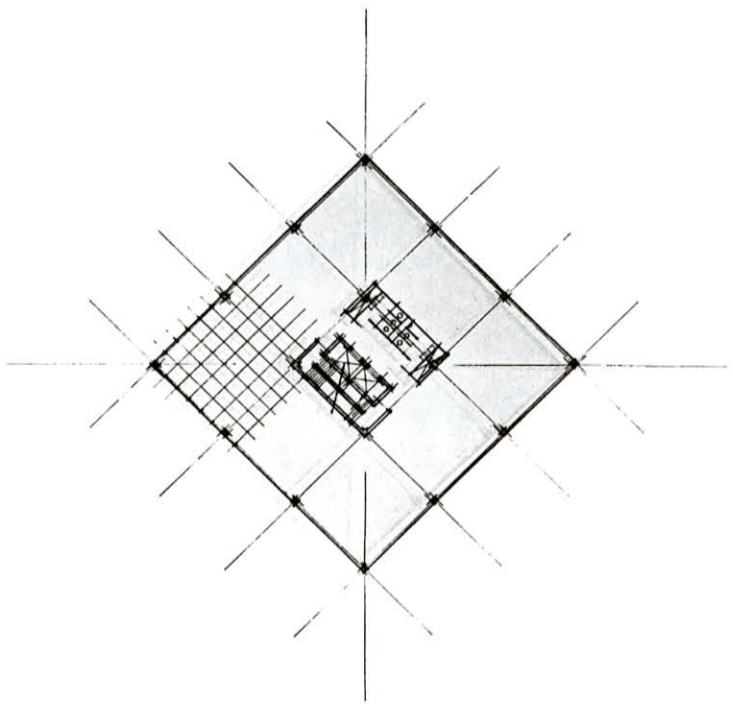
Although it is a relatively small office building, the central building should be an important symbol of progress in the city at this stage. It also must be memorable for the potential customers of Great Western Cities, Inc. Yet in the vast space it will initially inhabit and in the context of bigger buildings of which it will later be a part, it is small indeed. Its location is therefore chosen and its context designed to enhance its visibility from near and far, in both the near future and the far future, and to increase its impact.

We have done all we can in the design of the building itself to make it look big and seem important. Our first idea was to make it a pure symbol and reproduce the Eiffel Tower in the Mojave desert at seven-eighths scale (the scale used for furniture in model homes, as opposed to the five-eighths scale of Disneyland): This would bring world renown to the city. In the end we settled for an architectural tower to create an impact both perceptual and symbolic in this setting. The program for the tower is simple: a small auditorium and flexible office space for the mayor and city departments to expand. Excess office space will contain at early stages professional offices and local business offices including those of Great Western Cities, Inc.

But when we settled on the smallest possible typical floor area for a square office tower and divided that into the maximum total number of square feet the town could support, we ended up with a cube and not a tower — a seven-story cube with a conventional service core in the center, 90 feet square and 90 feet high. We decided a cube in a desert would have impact and might acquire as much symbolism as a tower. So we made our office block with an open gallery, with auditorium and mayor's suite on the ground floor, with a sales office observation deck and mechanical equipment penthouse hidden behind a tall parapet on the top floor, and with conventional office floors in between.





236. Ground floor plan

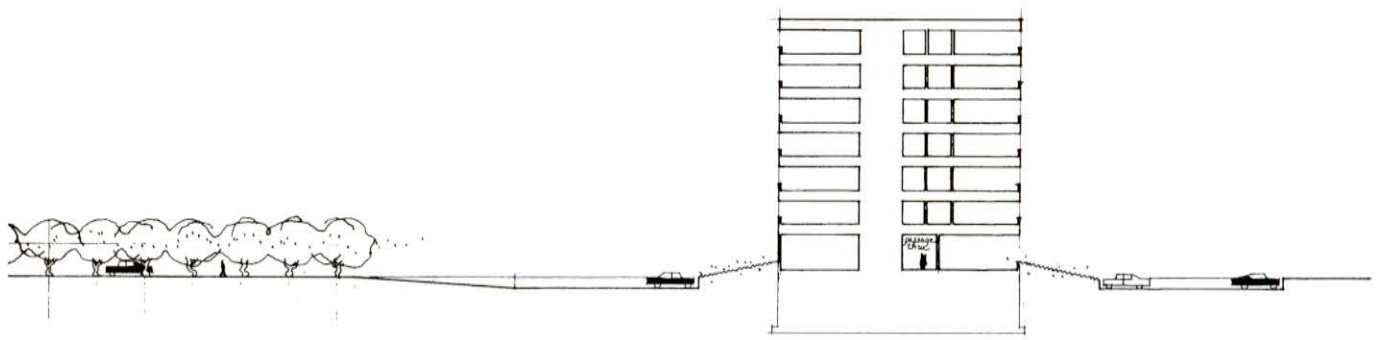
237. Typical floor plan

The problem of solar radiation and conduction is crucial for an air-conditioned building in the desert. Our first approach was to cover the cube with big brise-soleils — Pop Corbu. This proved impractical because an increase in the scale of the brise-soleils required an absurd increase in their depth and because the labor market in the United States is not that of India. Instead we solved this problem through the use of mirrored glass.

We did all we could to keep the mirrored cladding looking abstract, by making windows and spandrels the same height and width to produce an overall stacked pattern on all elevations. The material is the same all over, transparent for the windows and backed with opaque material for the spandrels (although at night, when the lights are on inside, the windows are differentiated from the spandrels). The glass is tinted gold, and the result is a golden mirrored cube — a little object in the desert, with a big impact in the sun.

Le Doux was our model for this building. Its distant image seen across the desert, or later in an architectural context, is austere, even ominous, with its flashing surface and ambiguous scale; but close up it is softened by architectural details and complexities. Some assurance of real size comes from the entrances on two facades, from mullioned windows and jointed spandrels (although admittedly the overall pattern from these elements accentuates the ambiguous scale), from the difference in size of the ground and top floors, from the letters etched in some of the panels identifying the building, from the sunken moat of parking, and especially from the ramped border of multicolored flowers at the base of the building. They soften the cube yet enhance it through contrast. But above all, they are pretty.

This building is a valid duck. It is pictorial, sculptural, ultimately symbolic, and only quasi-architectural. We think it is more memorable than pure architecture. We learned this lesson in image making from the Strip.



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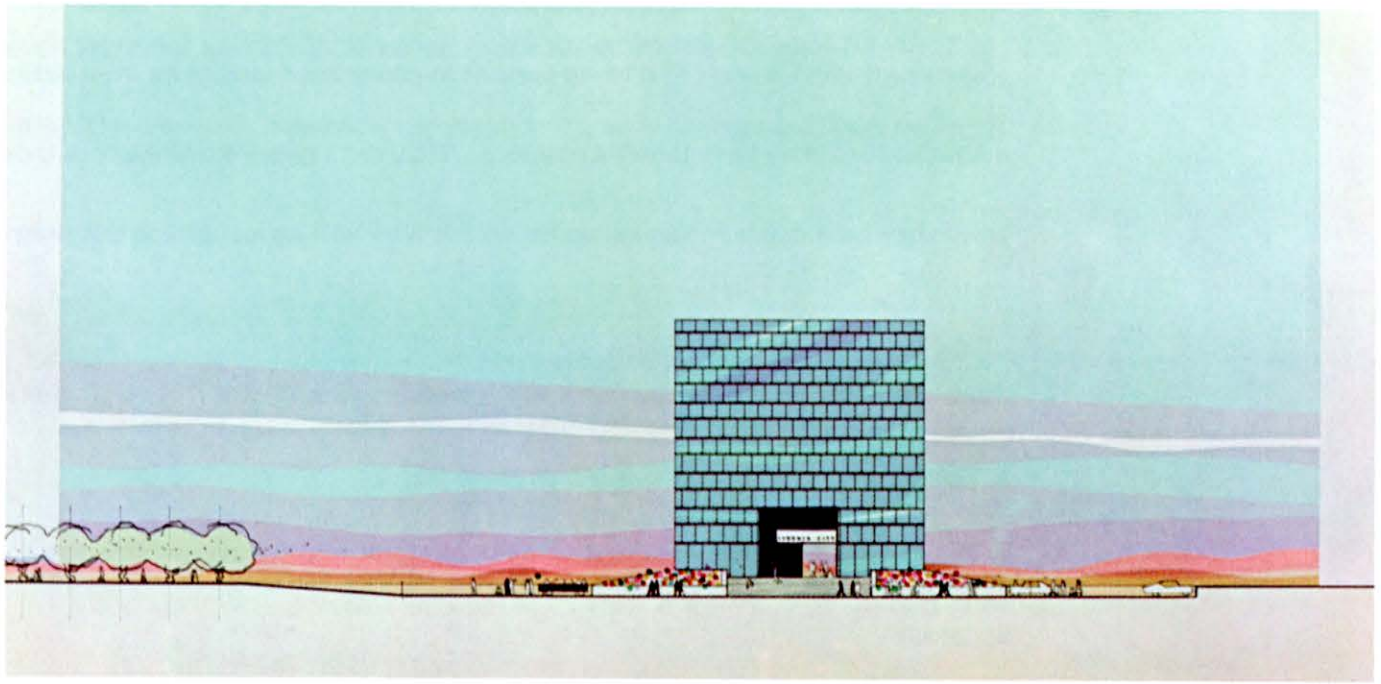

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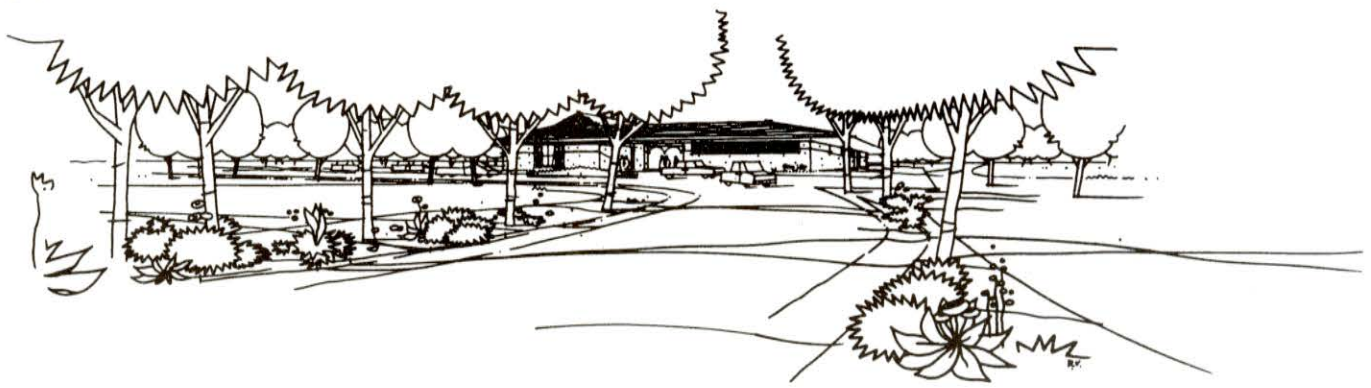
A Cemetery
(with the assistance of John Maegher)

We recommended that a cemetery and mortuary for California City be located at the edge of the city bordering high-income housing. We suggested a series of lawns for burial to be multiplied as needed, enclosed by wooded areas, and to act as screens for the surrounding houses. The mortuary building looks like a residence, and from the entrance drive the whole complex resembles a country club.

240



Appendix: On Design Review Boards and Fine Arts Commissions

Design Review Boards raise certain constitutional issues. Lawyers speak of them in terms of "due process," and "equal protection of the law." Due process means a fair hearing, and equal protection means no arbitrary discrimination.

There are two ways to achieve these:

1. By building standards into the legal system.

2. Where the problem is not amenable to quantifying the standard, by building fairness into procedures, by requiring accountability in the exercise of discretion.

There are certain standards that have long controlled the design of buildings. In zoning, for example, we have set-back lines, bulk controls, and height limitations. These are standards that an architect can work within because they really don't involve very much discretion, and every person who has ability is subjected to them. If these standards are laid down in advance by the City, one architect cannot say that he is particularly discriminated against, though he might disagree with the standard itself.

Where we can't lay down standards, where the problem is not amenable to standards, we appoint a board and give it discretion. The Board must be accountable in the exercise of its discretion. We have in the American system of government various ways of making persons in power accountable for their actions. Judges, for example, have great discretion, but they have to write opinions. They can't rule for one party without saying why. They can be criticized when they have opened their minds for criticism by writing an opinion or giving an opinion. This is a great protection.

From a legal point of view the heart of the problem with Design Review Boards is that:

1. There are no standards laid down to guide them.

2. They have broad discretion, and we have not built into the system any way of making them accountable for their actions.

Professor Jesse Dukeminier

(From an interview, May 1971)

University of California, Los Angeles

The courts have ruled that beauty is an urban amenity to be sought through the police powers, review boards, and other regulatory measures; but they have omitted to set the standards by which beauty may be defined or the processes through which it may be equitably judged to be present. Local authorities have reacted by appointing "experts" (usually local architects) who use their own discretion in assigning beauty or lack of it to the works of others. The limits set on capriciousness, authoritarianism, or venality in such a system are those internal to the individual review board members. This is rule by man rather than rule by law.

In proceedings based solely on taste, the supplicant architect is left perplexed, and often thousands of dollars are lost as he makes frustrating attempts, scheming rather than designing, to anticipate or to follow the dicta of "experts" whose tastes and philosophies differ from his own or are so capricious as to be incomprehensible to him.

Aesthetically too, the aim is not achieved. Any artist could have told the lawmakers that you cannot legislate beauty and that attempts to do so by the use of experts will result not only in gross injustice but in an ugly deadness in the environment.

Beauty escapes in the pursuit of safety, which promotes a simplistic sameness over a varied vitality. It withers under the edicts of today's aging architectural revolutionaries who man the review boards and who have achieved aesthetic certainty.

Strip. The Architecture of the Strip: Compiling a Pattern Book. The Interior Oasis. Las Vegas Lighting. Architectural Monumentality and the Big, Low Space. Las Vegas Styles. Las Vegas Signs. Inclusion and the Difficult Order: Controls and Beautification. Image of Las Vegas: Inclusion and Allusion in Architecture. The Duck and the Decorated Shed. Decoration on the Shed. Some Definitions Using the Comparative Method. Explicit and Implicit Associations. Heroic and Original, or Ugly and Ordinary. Ornament: Signs and Symbols, Denotation and Connotation, Heraldry and Physiognomy, Meaning and Expression. Is Boring Architecture Interesting? Historical and Other Precedents: Towards an Old Architecture.